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The NUST Journal of International Peace & Stability (NJIPS) is a peer-reviewed bi-annual academic journal devoted to research and analysis pertaining to contemporary peace and conflict dynamics worldwide. NJIPS welcomes submissions (in the form of research articles, research essays, and book reviews) and covers a wide range of issues that constitute the field of peace and conflict, including peacekeeping, armed conflict and peacebuilding, regional and international security, conflict resolution, and violent extremism and terrorism.

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# De-Radicalization, Rehabilitation and Re-integration of Juvenile Militants in Pakistan: A Case Study of Sabaoon

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## Abstract

In the wake of a protracted militancy in the Malakand region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the post-2007 military operations in the Swat valley culminated in the soft counter-insurgency approach under the De-Radicalization and Emancipation Programs (DREP). In doing so, Sabaoon was established in 2009 as the first de-radicalization initiative in Pakistan and the only program in the world to de-radicalize juvenile militants associated with Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Furthermore, Sabaoon focused on reintegrating the juvenile into their communities as productive and valuable citizens. By drawing on primary and secondary data sources, this paper attempts to highlight the push and pull factors that led the children towards militancy, their rehabilitation methods and techniques used at Sabaoon, and the impacts of the rehabilitation program on reintegration into society. The paper argues that the Sabaoon program aimed to promote religious harmony and tolerance by addressing the ideological and social problems that drove the children towards militancy. The study further argues that most reintegrated children are now running their own small businesses, such as auto-mechanic workshops, carpentry, and electronic appliance repair, while some serve in government and non-government institutions. However, the data also suggests a higher recidivism ratio among these juveniles.

## Keywords

De-radicalization, rehabilitation, reintegration, juvenile/child militants, Swat, Pakistan

## Introduction

The radicalization and Talibanization of Swat in the post-9/11 era was the offshoot of Sufi Muhammad's movement, Tehrik-e-Nifaaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM), which originally began in the Malakand division in 1992 for the enforcement of

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*Sharia* Law in the region<sup>4</sup>. The movement that started with a small following gained strength in 1994-1995 and more conspicuously in 2001 when Sufi Muhammad recruited and sent around 10,000 fighters to Afghanistan to confront the United States invasion of the country. The Musharraf government, which became an important ally of the United States in the War on Terror (WoT), banned the TNSM in January 2002, arrested Sufi Muhammad and his 30 companions (on April 24, 2002), and sentenced them to jail for seven years on charges of fomenting terrorism and militancy. Sufi Muhammad then brought to the fore his son-in-law Mullah Fazlullah as the new leader of TNSM; he re-organized the TNSM cadres and decided to command the movement in a more militant direction (Abbas, 2006; Fleischner, 2011).

The militancy in Swat under the TNSM ran at a moderate pace till 2007, when the *Lal Masjid* (Red Mosque) operation in Islamabad, which proved to be a watershed; provided newfound wherewithal to the militant cause and acted as a precursor to worsening security situation all over Pakistan (Afridi, 2018). The TNSM along with more than 40 other Taliban groups from the erstwhile FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, formed an alliance in December 2007 under the leadership of Baitullah Mehsud, leading to the creation of the infamous Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Fazlullah was made the head of the Swat chapter of TTP (Akbar, 2016; Fleischner, 2011). From 2007-2009, the TTP chapter in Swat tried to take control of the region through fear and violence.

It was in November 2007 that the Pakistan army launched a military operation, *Rah-e-Haq* (the pathway of truth), by sending troops to combat the militancy in Swat. This led to a series of military operations, including *Rah-e-Rast* (the straight path) on April 26, 2009, wherein the military established bases around the region (i.e., Swat) and blocked all routes to ensure targeted and effective operations against the militants (e.g., McKelvey, 2011). More than 1,000 Taliban casualties were reported by June 15, and 106 soldiers lost their lives to bring peace to the region (Abbasi, 2014). In addition, thousands of Taliban were either arrested or made to surrender, including up to 1200 boys who were trained to become suicide bombers.

Due to the overwhelming presence of teenagers in the militancy, the Pakistan army decided to adopt soft measures while engaging experts from different fields, such as religious education, psychology, and sociology, to create a program for rehabilitating these children (Trim, 2011). It was with the help of the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Hum Pakistani Foundation (HPF) that the army launched the Sabaoon De-Radicalization and Emancipation Program (DREP) to provide these children with a second chance to live a 'normal' life (Basit, 2015a; Rana, 2011). The program was then handed over to HPF and Dr. Muhammad Farooq Khan<sup>5</sup>, a moderate religious scholar and Vice Chancellor of the University of Swat, while the overall management and supervision of the program remained under the control of the Pakistan Army (Basit, 2015a; Johnston et al., 2016). This program is recognized by several scholars, including Dr. John Horgan (cited in Rafi, 2015), as a very unique and the first ever de-radicalization and rehabilitation center of its type in the world (Rafi, 2015). Rana (2011) argues that the rehabilitation model in Swat is

<sup>4</sup> The valley of Swat is situated in the north of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. It is situated in a geo-strategically important region of the world, where the significant regions of Asia, South Asia, China, and Central Asia meet. Swat is at a distance of approximately 250 km from Islamabad, the capital city of Pakistan (Rome, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Muhammad Farooq was later assassinated by two armed men in his clinic at Mardan on October 2, 2010 (Hoti, 2010).

similar to that of Saudi Arabia in defusing anti-state tendencies and restoring the self-respect of the detainees by eliminating the psychological burden and reintegrating them back into society. He further suggests that Pakistan should learn from the western rehabilitation models to develop strategies to assess security threats posed by militants. The Sabaoon program aimed to address the inductee's ideological and social problems that had driven them to join the Taliban movement and adopted a multi-disciplinary approach involving several components for de-radicalizing and rehabilitating. With regards, this paper explores the de-radicalization and reintegration of young detainees (i.e., juveniles) under the Sabaoon program and the countering of recidivism among them. The two main research questions underlying this research are: (i) What rehabilitation methods and techniques were used at Sabaoon to de-radicalize juvenile militants? (ii) What steps were undertaken to rehabilitate and reintegrate under the program?

### **Understanding (De)Radicalization, Rehabilitation and Re-integration**

Similar to the term 'terrorism', the concept of radicalization is highly contested. Although the literature provides a variety of definitions, many scholars define radicalization as the process of adopting ideas and beliefs that could lead to *acts* of violence and terrorism. Rafique and Ahmed (2013, p. 115) believe that radicalization is "the process of adopting or promoting an extremist belief system for the purpose of facilitating ideologically based violence to advance political, religious, or social change." According to Qazi (2013, p. 2) radicalization is a process that changes individuals from "passiveness or activism to become more revolutionary, militant, or extremist, especially where there is intent towards, or support for, violence." Rabasa (2010, p. 1) also holds a similar view and understands radicalization as a process of developing extremist belief systems, including the "willingness to use, support, or facilitate violence, as a method to affect societal change." Other scholars, such as Horgan and Braddock (2010), differentiate between 'radicalization' and 'violent radicalization'. According to them, radicalization includes the 'social and psychological process,' whereby individuals commit to extremist religious or political ideology, which may not necessarily lead to violence. Violent radicalization occurs when this social and psychological process makes individuals engage with a violent non-state movement. Therefore, radicalization can be understood as a process whereby an individual may undergo fundamental changes in his *belief* systems and *ideas* for pursuing the goals of social, political, or religious change in society. The mentioned fundamental changes may also depend on the context and circumstances that lead them to use violence.

De-radicalization is primarily understood as a socio-psychological process undertaken to de-motivate an individual's commitment to and involvement in violent radical activities so that their risks of engagement in violence dissipate (Horgan & Braddock, 2010). According to Rabasa (2010) and Khan (2015), it is the process in which extremists renounce their worldviews, forswear violence to effect social change, and recognize that political, social, and economic change or transformation occurs in a pluralistic environment and that the use of violence is not acceptable. Qazi (2013) argues that de-radicalization refers to programs that aim at reintegrating radicalized individuals into society by seeking a complete shift in their mindset and attitudes. For this research, we understand de-radicalization as a process that transforms an individual's radical ideas to make him/her more politically normalized and simultaneously reduce his/her involvement in violent activities.



Rehabilitation is a practice that seeks to transform or normalize a criminal into a socially defined 'normal' citizen through different actions which may include psychological counseling, interpersonal assistance (i.e., education and family intervention), and structural assistance (i.e., employment and economic opportunities) (e.g., Anderson & Gröning, 2016). Abbasi (2014) and Khan (2018) contend that rehabilitation refers to policies that intend to reform criminals instead of punishing or isolating them from the community. Hence, this research also conceives 'rehabilitation' as a process involving necessary education and training to transform (violent) extremists and reintegrate them into society as useful citizens.

The United Nations defines 'reintegration' as a process "by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income" (as cited in Pašagić, 2019, p. 118). Reintegration can therefore be seen as a process that helps the transition of an individual outside of prison while maintaining a crime-free lifestyle (Davis et al., 2013). Anders Nilsson (2005, p. 27) suggests reintegration as a "societal process aiming at the economic, political, and social assimilation of ex-combatants and their families into civil society" (as cited in Khan, 2018, p. 78). Thus, we understand reintegration as a process through which an individual is transitioned into society after release from internment as a law-abiding, goal-directed, and productive person.

The literature on de-radicalization and rehabilitation of militants and extremists explores the efforts of various countries around the world, including Canada, the United States, United Kingdom, Nigeria, Somalia, Kenya, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Singapore, Philippines, and Indonesia (e.g., Ahmad, 2016; Ali, 2015; Bertelsen, 2015; Clubb & Tapley, 2018; El-Said, 2017; Khalil et al., 2019; Neumann, 2010; Striegher, 2013; Suarda, 2016). However, it is important to understand the contextual dynamics and factors that influence the approach and methodology of de-radicalization. In the context of broad policy approaches to countering radicalization, Neumann (2013) explores two approaches to be ideal, i.e. Anglo-Saxon and European approaches. While the Anglo-Saxon approach deals with behavioural radicalization, the European one focuses on both cognitive and behavioural radicalization; nevertheless, much focus remains on cognitive aspects. The Anglo-Saxon approach contends that police should oversee counter-radicalization methods (and related initiatives). Whereas the European approach resists counter-radicalization to be possessed by Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs). The approach believes that countering radicalization is a continuous political and civil effort, which needs to involve both government and civil society resources. Neumann, therefore, argues that the European approach is more effective in eliminating the ideological and structural breeding grounds out of which violent radicalization emerges.

This paper argues that the de-radicalization approach of Sabaoon resonates with the aforementioned European methodology. For instance (as mentioned earlier), in devising the Sabaoon program, the Pakistan army involved civil society and engaged experts from different fields. Furthermore, the main objective behind Sabaoon was to provide juvenile militants with a 'second chance' to live a normal. With regards, the subjects were equipped with the necessary education and vocational skills or training (Basit, 2015a; Khan, 2010; Qazi, 2011; Rana, 2011).

## **Methodology**

To elucidate the case of Sabaoon, a case study approach was adopted. A qualitative methodology was employed for data collection and analysis. Both primary and secondary data sources were used to present the case of Sabaoon comprehensively. In total, eight semi-structured interviews were collected (as a source of primary data) from the former staff members of Sabaoon: one beneficiary of the program, four former teachers at Sabaoon, two psychologists, and a former staff member of the center who served with Dr. Muhammad Farooq Khan in initiating and developing the program. The interviews primarily explored the following related themes:

- Reasons and factors that led the juvenile to join the TTP violent movement
- Methods and approaches used in the Sabaoon program,
- Different modules of the rehabilitation program
- The process of induction and categorization of detainees in different groups
- The time span of the program and the life inside the facility
- Effectiveness of the rehabilitation program

The main reasons behind the section of Sabaoon as DREP was four-folded: (i) Sabaoon emerged as a unique rehabilitation center that focused exclusively on juvenile militants and functions as a boarding school, (ii) It attempted to rehabilitate and reintegrate the juvenile militants who were trained to become suicide bombers, (iii) In contrast to many other de-radicalization and rehabilitation centers in Pakistan, under the control of Pakistan army (such as Mishal, Sparlay, Heila, and Rastoon), Sabaoon emerged as the rare case which was administered by civilian authorities.

The data collected from the interviews were processed by thematic analysis. The emergent themes were clustered around the literature concerning de-radicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration. Considering the sensitive nature of this research, formal permission was secured from the relevant security authorities. With regards, a formal approval and authority letter was provided to the researchers by the Department of Political Science, the University of Peshawar, outlining the purposes behind the research and requesting cooperation. Moreover, the interviews with the staff members of the Sabaoon were subjected to several ethical considerations. The respondents were thoroughly briefed about the nature, aims, and objectives of the research before the interviews. Consent forms were presented to every respondent, and confidentiality aspect was ensured. To conceal the identities of the respondents, pseudonyms were assigned. In addition, several secondary sources were consulted (such as journal articles, newspapers, documentaries, and reports) to capture the existing landscape of DERP in the context of Pakistan (in particular erstwhile FATA and PATA).

This research also had several limitations. By the time the research began, the Sabaoon DREP had been closed (i.e., August 2019), and a Monitoring Cell (MC) was set up at Mingora to monitor the activities of the beneficiaries. The closure of the centre limited the researcher's access and capacity to directly observe the de-radicalization and rehabilitation activities at the Sabaoon center. MC Sabaoon administration was restricted from sharing any program data with outsiders. The security authorities also limited access to the beneficiaries of the Sabaoon programme; hence, it was very challenging to contact the respondents who have been associated with Sabaoon in different capacities. For instance, during the fieldwork, the researcher contacted thirteen former staff members of Sabaoon, but only six agreed to participate in the interviews. Nevertheless, this research highly

acknowledges the General Head Quarters (GHQ) of the Pakistan army for facilitating this important research. In particular, the military supported securing a visit to Sabaoon-II, an offshoot of Sabaoon DREP Swat.

### **Becoming a Child Militant: The Push and Pull Factors**

After their induction, the children at Sabaoon were made to undergo psychological assessments. The objective of the assessment was to understand the level of emotional, psychological, ideological, and intellectual condition and orientation. Additional information such as personal details, family background and issues, and social preferences of the children was also acquired through three different techniques: (i) 'Objective', (ii) 'Subjective', (iii) and 'Projective'. The techniques helped to evaluate and identify the reasons and causes for children joining the Taliban movement. During the interviews, it came to light that the push and pull factors for radicalization varied for different individuals. It was observed that several socio-economic and psychological factors were at play (see also Azam and Fatima, 2017). The push factors included poverty, deprivation, low education levels, socio-political marginalization, corruption, lawlessness, bad governance, and political pressures ('Rahman', personal communication, October 18, 2020; see also Afridi, 2018; Khan, 2015; Peracha et al., 2016). While pull factors, on the other hand, included group factors (such as roles), monetary incentives (salaries, shares of goods, and others), a sense of acceptance, a feeling of self-importance, an increase in the sense of power and authority, and belief in the spiritual cause of fighting for some otherworldly attainments ('Imad', personal communication, October 20, 2020).

In addition, Peracha et al. (2016) and Azam & Fatima (2017), in their studies on the Sabaoon and Mishal, respectively, have identified several common features that influenced the children to join the militant setup, such as low socio-economic status/high poverty; large family size; absence of a biological father or a fatherly figure (mostly working abroad); middle child (of large families); strict and/or negligent behavior of parents and teachers; lack of supervision on activities; lack of formal or informal education; lack of religious understanding or selective religious understanding; school drop-outs; head injury/possibility of soft neuropathology; truancy/absence from home (because of morbid trends); and history of physical or sexual abuse as a child. They also identified different common personality traits among the children, such as lack of logical reasoning/critical thinking, emotional instability (anxiety disorder, depression, aggressive impulses, and insecurity), inferiority complex, revenge-seeking, and authority-seeking behavior.

Although Azam and Fatima (2017) claim that religious indoctrination was not the primary motivating factor in the case of radicalization in Swat, several respondents revealed that many families donated a child to the Taliban to fight for the 'noble' cause ('Imad', personal communication, October 20, 2020). This was ascertained by another former staff member of the Sabaoon ('Rahman', personal communication, October 18, 2020), who added that majority of the children joined the Taliban either on their own or were approached by the Taliban. During the interviews, it was also found that most detainees were school dropouts or left schools to join the Taliban, while few had attended *Madrassas*. This clearly shows that the children were ideologically inspired by the Taliban doctrine due to exposure to their teachings through peer and family connections or had been raised in conservative, traditional setups, which regard religious indoctrination as an essential element of upbringing. Another important aspect is their families' relatively poor socio-economic background, which compelled them to release one of their children for service to the

militant group. This afforded them protection in uncertain situations and ensured small wherewithal in the form of some financial compensation. Afridi (2018) also observed that the marginalized local population in Swat was highly attracted to the Taliban due to their acute social problems, as more than 50 percent of all rural households have no access to arable land. He further pointed out that the lower strata of the society, including underprivileged tenants and poor laborers, joined the Taliban movement as foot soldiers. It is not to be ignored that nearly 60 percent of the 'would-be' suicide bombers detained by the Pakistan military belonged to destitute families (Afridi, 2018).

### **Sabaoon DREP**

The Sabaoon programme was initiated to address both the ideological and social problems that had driven the children towards militancy and to reintegrate them into society as valuable and productive citizens (Khan, 2010; Qazi, 2011). The programme's objectives included (Azam & Fatima, 2017; Peracha et al., 2016):

- To provide a positive environment conducive to the rehabilitation of children.
- To remove the psychological burden on the children affected by ideological exploitation and coercion.
- To facilitate their ability to differentiate and integrate information primarily related to values, morals and ethical dilemmas.
- To provide corrective religious education and communicate the moderate ideology of Islam.
- To provide goal-oriented mainstream education and vocational skills.
- To reduce the possibility of exploitation and radicalization of immediate family members of groups.
- To achieve long-term peace and stability in the Swat valley through targeted de-radicalization.
- To ensure a positive protective environment for the reintegration of the children, their families, and a supportive community and society.

The children were initially inducted for a period of 18 months; however, the time a child spent in the Sabaoon depended upon the individual case and specific conditions. Therefore, often their stay exceeded 18 months. Regarding the induction criterion, two crucial aspects are important to be highlighted here. First, children under the age of 17 were hosted at Sabaoon. Secondly, the induction was purely based on willingness to undergo de-radicalization training or voluntarily turned in by their families (Afridi, 2018). The decision for induction was then taken by the Mental Health Team (MHT) in collaboration with the psychologists and Program Director. The process included an initial interview with the child, psychometric assessment, family narrative, community visit, risk evaluation, initial academic assessment, and medical examination (Peracha et al., 2016).

During the initial phase of the program, around 34 percent of the inducted children in Sabaoon included detainees who were voluntarily turned in by their families. Thirty-nine percent comprised those who had been apprehended by the security forces, whereas around 25 percent of the detainees were the ones who had surrendered before the start of the program to security forces (Parveen, 2010). The total induction into Sabaoon was around 226, engaged in seven different batches from 2009-2015 (Afridi, 2018). Most of the detainees were from Malakand Division; however, 17 were from other parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

During the preliminary stages, the psychologists performed an initial assessment and screening and assigned 'risk levels' to each detainee. Thus, a detainee who (as radicalized) did mostly menial tasks such as cleaning, cooking, fetching water, and serving the Taliban movement for a short time would be considered as 'low-risk'. The ones involved in logistical help, such as transport and providing access to food and water, were considered 'medium-risk'. Furthermore, those trained in weapons and combat, executed attacks, guarded Taliban checkpoints, or worked as spies were considered 'high-risk'. Another categorization was meant for the ones who had joined the Taliban voluntarily, trained as suicide bombers, and firmly believed in the ideology of the Taliban. Such categorization was termed as 'very high-risk'. From the initial group of the Sabaoon that comprised 97 child soldiers, 40 were categorized as 'low-risk', 45 as 'medium-risk', and 12 as 'high-risk' (Parveen, 2010; Basit, 2015b; Qazi, 2013).

Hettiarachchi (2010) believes rehabilitation (as a process) is about changing 'hearts and minds' through engaging the beneficiary in several transformative activities. She further argues that practical livelihood concerns need to be addressed through the involvement of education, vocation, social rehabilitation, and extra-curricular activities. At the same time, the ideological aspect can be countered through counseling, creative therapies, group work, role models, and community and family programs.

To address the individual needs of the detainees, the Sabaoon program also adopted a multi-disciplinary approach that involved several components. The rehabilitation curriculum was divided into four modules: (i) psycho-social support, (ii) education module including formal and corrective religious education, (iii) vocational training, (iv) and a social module to discuss social issues with the detainees and hold sessions with the families of the detainees. Therefore, the detainees were intensely engaged in several activities. Besides the formal schooling and psychological sessions, the children were also involved in sports and indoor games, watching TV, a Quran class in the evening, and studying hours before bed. Extra-curricular and recreational activities were also conducted, such as drama competitions, debates, lectures, audiovisual aids, cultural events, art, and study tours to Islamabad and other places ('Ghfar', personal communication, October 26, 2020).

However, those violating the discipline were given different punishments, such as a ban on playing games or watching TV for a specific period of time. The punishment depended upon the magnitude of violation and behavior of the detainee. The most severe punishment was not to allow the detainee to meet his family members on Sunday ('Imad', personal communication, October 20, 2020). Since it is rather difficult to challenge the mindset and behavior of an extremist because of its foundation in religious legitimacy, the methods used at Sabaoon were formulated with the long-term goal of enabling the children to entertain more balanced, moderate, and tolerant views (Basit, 2015a). The children were trained to regain a sense of self-worth, respect, and value in *life*. For this purpose (i.e., inculcating a sense of responsibility), a remarkable experiment was used by tasking every detainee with the care of a rose bush or tree. The task was supposedly meant to create a sense of responsibility and self-worth in the detainees. Posters of national heroes and places in Pakistan had also been put up to remind them of their history and culture to develop an affiliation to their country and its identity markers (Leghari, 2013).

The rehabilitation of the children at Sabaoon also involved psycho-social support mechanisms. The support mechanism aimed to de-indoctrinate extremist ideologies and offered psychological counseling to the detainees ('Murad', personal

communication, October 24, 2020). In doing so, MHT, comprised of psychologists, religious scholars, and social workers, regularly conducted counseling sessions (both at the individual and group level) with the detainees for their psycho-social support ('Ghafar', personal communication, October 26, 2020). The MHT also provided treatment to those who had injuries, nightmares, or trauma and suffered from various psychological, emotional, and physical disorders due to any physical or sexual abuse by the Taliban. These discussion sessions involved concerns about the detainee's personal life, social and ideological issues, behavior modification, and family counseling (Parveen, 2010; Qazi, 2013; see also Dallasnews Administrator, 2011; McCarthy, 2016).

The Sabaoon program used concepts from social psychology to heal the children's emotional and psychological wounds. The primary motivation was to develop a secure space for the psycho-social intervention of those detainees who had not only acted violently but witnessed violent acts. This intervention tried to restore a healthy mindset and to make them effective persons in life by assessing the detainees in all their complexities ('Ghafar', personal communication, October 26, 2020). This included: personality, social and contextual factors (such as community organization versus disorganization and *in-group* versus *out-group* dynamics); familial factors (such as familial dysfunction and involvement in militancy); and protective factors (such as supervision from and bonding with their families) (Jenson & Klein, 2012; Khan & Peracha, 2017). During the process, the detainees were provided with a comfortable, friendly and open environment for engagements during the repeated sessions. The detainees were further exposed to understanding the difference between *right* and *wrong* and to accept what they had committed (Alvi, 2014; Qureshi, 2011).

### ***The Educational Module at Sabaoon***

The educational module at Sabaoon was developed to counter the extremist ideological narrative and promote religious pluralism and tolerance. In doing so, Dr. Muhammad Farooq Khan, a moderate religious scholar, formulated a pioneering curriculum. He used to visit Sabaoon regularly, and every Friday, he lectured the detainees on the basic teachings of Islam and the concept of *Jihad*<sup>6</sup> and *Qital*<sup>7</sup>. This was attempted to develop a moderate outlook on their beliefs and actions ('Rahman', personal communication, October 18, 2020). As stressed by Dr. Muhammad Farooq Khan (2010), the children at Sabaoon were persuaded to *Jihad* and trained to become suicide bombers in the name of Islam. They had only heard the Taliban's version of Islam and had never experienced counter-narrative. According to the respondent, the children were 'brainwashed' by the Taliban and were led to believe that Pakistan is an unIslamic country. It was further revealed that the detained children were under the impression that the democracy and the judicial system of Pakistan are against the spirit of Islam and that the national leadership are functioning under the influence of the United States; hence, they shall be treated as *Kafirs* (non-believers) ('Faizan', personal communication, October 18, 2020). They were also made to believe that any pious person or group could declare *Jihad* and can use force for the eradication of vice from society. Such religious indoctrination demanded that the Sabaoon hires religious scholars to give sermons on different and/or interpretation of religion Islam.

<sup>6</sup> The Arabic term *jihad* literally means a "struggle" or "striving." This term appears in the Quran in different contexts and can include various forms of violent and nonviolent struggles (The Conversation, 2019).

<sup>7</sup> The word *Qital* is referred to as 'armed struggle' or combative version of *Jihad*. The word in Arabic means 'fighting' and has been mentioned in Quran multiple times (Individual land, n.d.)



Several respondents highly acknowledged Dr. Khan's role and efforts, which reintroduced and re-presented the religion Islam as promoting peace and tolerance. His intense engagements with Sabaoon enabled the detainees to understand *Jihad's* true philosophical (yet divine) meanings in contrast to what extremists propagated. Since noticeable detainees were trained as suicide bombers by the Taliban, a particular focus of the discussions was to explain why suicide is forbidden in Islam and how such acts violate the Holy Quran and *Sunnah* (see also Qureshi, 2011; Khan, 2010). During an interview session with a former staff member of Sabaoon, it was mentioned that the detained children were educated about human values, sympathy, and love for humanity ('Murad', personal communication, October 24, 2020). The children were also taught critical aspects of the Pakistani constitution, the *Shariah Law* and, more importantly, the difference between *Jihad* and *Qital* (i.e., in what circumstances *Jihad* is binding and who could declare *Jihad* and *Qital*). Quran classes were also conducted regularly in the evening, which included *Nazira*, *Hifz*, and translation of the Holy Quran ('Imad', personal communication, October 20, 2020).

In addition to the above teaching module, the school walls were also covered with posters containing verses from the Holy Quran and *Hadith* that denounced the killing of humans and violence. The objective was to remind the detainees that the brutal and oppressive acts of the Taliban were unIslamic (Leghari, 2013; Qazi, 2013). These religious teachings were, however, combined with formal education up to higher secondary education and bachelor's level. For this purpose, the Provincial Education Commission's system and curricula were followed at Sabaoon. Additionally, the exams were affiliated with the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Malakand and the University of Malakand, respectively. The aim was to promote critical thinking and enable the detainees to pursue and continue higher education after successful rehabilitation ('Asad', personal communication, October 13, 2020; 'Imad', personal communication, October 20, 2020; 'Faizan', personal communication, October 18, 2020).

### ***Vocational Training for Rehabilitation***

The Sabaoon program also offered vocational training in different fields, such as computer skills, basic electrician skills, appliance repair, refrigeration, tailoring, carpentry, and masonry. The training staff for the electrician course was hired from Gandhara College Chakdara, and for the rest of the courses, a training team was outsourced from Rawalpindi. All the technical modules were affiliated with the Khyber Institute of Technical Education (Parveen, 2010). The logic behind this module was to incorporate different vocational skills to help the children create livelihoods after their reintegration. They were equipped with vocational skills to support themselves and their families. The vocational module was developed with the assumption that re-engagement in violent extremism can be prevented if the detainees have an actual job and a place to engage on a regular basis (Basit, 2015a).

### ***The Social Module at Sabaoon***

The 'Social module' involved counseling sessions with the detainees and their families. It included a family visit every Sunday and participation in different events inside Sabaoon ('Asad', personal communication, October 13, 2020). During the visit, the psychologists also discussed the various social issues of detainees with their family members (see also Afridi, 2018; Qazi, 2013; Qureshi, 2011). Furthermore, the respondents highlighted the need for engagement with the family members of the

detainees. Such an interaction enabled Sabaoon to understand the dynamics of their family systems and assess the level of family support for the detainees during the rehabilitation process. The involvement of the family and community sessions prepared the detainees to return to their families and communities. During this period, the detainees were assessed whether they were ready to return to their communities. Regular meetings with the detainees' families helped get support from the families and reduced recidivism risks (e.g., Basit, 2015b; Gill et al., 2020).

### ***Social Reintegration as a Final Step***

After the successful de-radicalization and rehabilitation of the detainees, the final step was reintegrating them back into their respective communities. In this process, the detainees were prepared to return to their communities through participation in different community-level activities, including religious and cultural festivals. According to Parveen (2010), deserving detainees were to be shortlisted for reintegration based on their performance in education and vocational skills, psycho-social assessment, specialists' observation, community survey, and familial level of engagement with former militants. In this vein, the 'low-risk' and psychologically stable detainees were reintegrated earlier ('Asad', personal communication, October 13, 2020; 'Imad', personal communication, October 20, 2020). The criteria for reintegration, as highlighted by Parveen (2010), included the following variables:

- Psychological adjustment in the context of no association of other family members with terrorists, militants, or the presence of militants in the community
- Vocational skills and the facilitation of loans for starting a small business
- Availability of schools and education.

Besides the above criteria for reintegration, Sabaoon had also set some conditions for the detainees and their families. The family had to agree that the detainee would report to the local LEA every week, and after the completion of six months, the reporting will be required monthly. The detainee will either go to school, a vocational skill training center, or start a small enterprise after being 'released'. Lastly, the detainee will not join any militant organization at any cost. In case of violation, punitive actions will be taken against the family/guarantor (Parveen, 2010).

### ***Post-Reintegration Monitoring***

The monitoring and follow-up of reintegrated individuals are essential for any rehabilitation program that may include a parole-like system, conducting ongoing risk assessments, holding supportive sessions to prevent recidivism, and carrying out pre-emptive work based on the risk profile (Hettiarachchi, 2010). During the interviews, respondents mentioned that Sabaoon set up a similar parole-like monitoring system for observing the progress of the children during the reintegration phase. For this purpose, a team of psychologists, termed as 'Monitoring Cell' (MC), was established at Circuit House Mingora to assess the activities of the reintegrated children and to counter any risk of recidivism ('Imad', personal communication, October 20, 2020; 'Rahman', personal communication, October 18, 2020). The monitoring process, which includes visits to villages and works with numerous sources, including family and community members and elders of the area, lasted for a minimum of two years (Basit, 2015b; Khan & Peracha, 2017; Qazi, 2013).

The post-reintegration program is important in many ways. First, it helps to assess the behavioural and attitudinal changes of the rehabilitated individuals when they interact natural environment. Here it is essential to understand that *within*



Sabaoon the individuals were monitored in a highly controlled environment. Secondly, it is crucial to monitor whether the beneficiaries can become financially independent or not. Likewise, it is also imperative to assess the effectiveness of psychological intervention in an uncontrolled environment. Lastly, there is a continuous need to identify the challenges the beneficiaries face in the 'real' world (Azam & Fatima, 2017). The regular monitoring of the reintegrated children has verified that they remain engaged in various constructive activities, including pursuing higher education or staying employed (Qazi, 2013). Regarding Sabaoon, several respondents confirmed that most rehabilitated children continued their education while securing admissions at Islamia College Peshawar and the University of Malakand. Similarly, many beneficiaries are currently self-employed and running their own shops (mechanics, electricians, or appliance repairing) ('Faizan', personal communication, October 18, 2020; 'Imad', personal communication, October 20, 2020).

### **Concluding Remarks**

Sabaoon adopted the multi-disciplinary and systematic approach to de-radicalize and rehabilitate juvenile militants in Swat. The DERP addressed both the ideological and structural problems (as push and pull factors) that led the individuals to join the Taliban movement. The paper elucidated that Sabaoon not only focused on de-radicalization and rehabilitation but also ensured effective reintegration of juvenile militants into their communities. In doing so, the initiative provided the beneficiaries with the necessary education and vocational skills to ensure socio-economic stability during the post-release period. Similarly, the children were exposed to counter-narrative to violent extremism and terrorism, fundamentally based on the teaching of Islam. With regards, particular attention was paid to recognizing religious pluralism and a sense of tolerance.

The effectiveness of any de-radicalization and rehabilitation program can be assessed through the number of beneficiaries reintegrated into society and the recidivism rate among them. The most important element of the Sabaoon was a post-reintegration monitoring system that continuously assessed the activities of the reintegrated children. More importantly, this research confirms that the recidivism rate was observed to be low amongst the 226 rehabilitated and reintegrated children. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that there is no independent assessment or evaluation of the Sabaoon program to support such claims empirically. For instance, the fieldwork discovered that around 10-15 reintegrated children were re-institutionalized at Sabaoon on the advice of the monitoring team and security officials. It was also reported that few released individuals were found to be at 'risk' or recidivists. As experienced by the authors, one of the main reasons behind the absence of any meaningful analysis of Sabaoon is the lack of access to the data. It is equally challenging to approach the reintegrated individuals and their families as they have been strictly advised not to share their life-history and/or experiences.

Nonetheless, the presented case of Sabaoon points to the importance of soft measures such as DREPs to effectively counter the menace of violent extremism and terrorism. It is equally important to consider contextual dynamics and factors (such as social system, culture, norms, and traditions) to ensure the effectiveness of DREPs. The data suggests that particular attention should be paid to providing youth employment opportunities. We argue that economic engagement produces a sense of productive-self; hence, generating a positive self-verification during the reintegration phase. Lastly, it is imperative to address the structural determinants — e.g., poverty,

deprivation, lack of education, socio-political marginalization, ill-governance — of violent extremism and terrorism at a broader societal level.

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# A Synopsis of Perspectives on (United Nations) Peace Operations from Theories of International Relations

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## Abstract

The post-Cold War era witnessed a significant increase in the size and scope of peace operations. However, the role and purpose of peace operations have not received commensurate attention within the intellectual context of theories of international relations. Comprehension of theoretical foundations of international relations is quintessential in understanding the motives behind and implications of third-party intervention in the quest for viable peace. This paper presents a synopsis of major theoretical paradigms in world politics with particular emphasis on their understanding of and implications for contemporary peace operations. The paper strives to delineate the central planks of a particular theoretical paradigm with special reference to the underpinnings of peace operations. Towards the end, the prospect of training peacekeepers to bridge the theory and practice of peace operations has been explored. The research findings shall fill a theoretical gap in peace operations studies and decipher the theoretical basis of the acerbic arguments against peace operations espoused by the obstructionists to the peace processes.

## Keywords

Peace operations, theories, international relations, peacekeeping

## Introduction

Peace Operations have become essential to the peace process in contemporary global conflicts (Karlsrud, 2018). Peace operations are carried out to stabilize the conflict zones and secure the conflict environment. Peace operations require planning strategies and executing the operations tactfully. Hence, such operations need to have frameworks (Jørgensen, 2017). Under the lens of International Relations (IR) theories, peace operations are often influenced by the conflict actors, institutions,

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population opinions, and the international arena. Understanding IR theories can aid in identifying the nature and significance of peace operations (Oksamytna & Karlsrud, 2020). Also, IR theories can give a variety of perspectives to peace operations. Jørgensen (2017) argues that IR theories can also provide a set of templates and analytical structures for peace operations to the peacekeepers and peacekeeping units.

Relatedly, the term ‘theory’ has many definitions in the discourse of IR. Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff (1993, p. 15) define theory as a “systematic reflection on phenomena, designed to explain them and to show how they are related to each other in a meaningful, intelligent pattern, instead of being merely random items in an incoherent universe”. Like all other definitions of ‘theory’ within the context of global politics, this definition assumes that there are patterns to international events and theorists of international relations strive to interpret those events as instances of a more significant phenomenon or theoretical proposition.

One way of conceptually thinking about contemporary peace operations is to view them as third-party intervention strategies to stabilize the conflict environment (Bellamy & Williams, 2004, p. 13). Comprehension of theoretical foundations of International Relations is quintessential in understanding the motives behind and implications of third-party intervention in the quest for a viable peace. IR theory has an indelible impact on peace operations because it “influences what people think of as legitimate or illegitimate, what analysts consider to be core agents and agendas in world politics and how material questions about responding to suffering are constituted” (Pugh, 2003, p. 105). Theories implicitly or explicitly define normative benchmarks and help identify various stakeholders in the peace process. An intelligent ‘Red Team’ analysis of the theoretical paradigms can help decipher the theoretical basis of the acerbic arguments against peace operations espoused by the obstructionists to the peace processes. Theories of IR also provide “a set of templates or pre-packaged analytical structures” (Sterling-Folker, 2006, p. 5) to decision-makers in which peace operations might be categorized, explained, or understood. The usefulness of theory in the high-tech age has been highlighted by Walt (1998, p. 29): “we need theories to make sense of the blizzard of information that bombards us daily”.

Within this debate, there is a significant academic gap in understanding the discourse of peace operations. The peace operation studies lack contextualization and theoretical perspectives. The research views the conduct of peace operations under the lens of theories of IR. The research aspires to be an addition to the already growing literature and helps bridge the existing research gap in the discourse of peace operations.

However, IR is a vast interdisciplinary social science, and the theories in the discipline diverge sharply over their understanding of global politics. The disagreements typically revolve around “the nature of the being (referred to as ontology), how we know and acquire knowledge about being (referred to as epistemology), and what methods we should adopt to study being (referred to as methodology)” (Sterling-Folker, 2006, p. 6). In addition, multiple variants of each theoretical framework are discussed in the present paper. An effort has been made only to delineate the main planks of a particular paradigm, with special reference to the underpinnings of peace operations. Since “states may sometimes choose to act alone or to lead others, on the whole, peacekeeping operations tend to be organized and coordinated by international organizations” (Bellamy & Williams, 2004, p. 105). Moreover, emphasis will be restricted to the role of international institutions in each theoretical framework being discussed. Overlap among theories is another limitation



worth mentioning as the “boundaries of each paradigm are somewhat permeable, and there is ample opportunity for intellectual arbitrage” (Walt, 1998, p. 43). This research paper is qualitative and exploratory in nature. The research consists mainly of secondary data; collected from books, journal articles, and other online sources.

### **Positivist versus Postpositivist IR Theorists**

The intellectual spectrum of IR scholars can be broadly divided into two schools of thought: positivists and post-positivists (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Positivists, also referred to as empiricists, are scholars who insist that there exists an objective state of being or ‘reality’. This reality can be accurately and scientifically measured. In other words, ontology is undisputable, and a fact is a fact. The goal of the IR theorist from a positivist’s perspective is to test competing IR theoretical perspectives against one another empirically. The best known methodological or analytical tools to perform such tests, as posited by Asal and colleagues (2020), are the levels of analysis; the three primary levels being the individual, the nation-state, and the system, also referred to, respectively, as the first image, the second image, and the third image. The first image is the micro-level, where causality is traced to the individuals making foreign policy and the psychology of human decision-making. The second image is the middle level and involves the examination of factors such as government structures, bureaucratic behavior, and interest groups, whereas the third image is the macro-level involving inter-state relations and other structural elements such as geography, relative power, governing system, or capitalist interdependence that might affect or direct the conduct of all nation-states. Realism, liberalism, and constructivism are the most prominent positivist theoretical paradigms.

Postpositivist scholars, also referred to as postempiricists (Pfaltzgraff Jr, 1997, p. 35), lie on the opposite end of the theoretical spectrum. They are skeptical that a fact is a fact and that it can be objectively known and measured. In other words, since ontology is disputed, the analytical methods drawn from pure sciences to explain the programmed behavior of atoms and molecules cannot be relied upon to describe the fickle and random behavior of human beings. They oppose the ‘rationalism’ of the positivists and insist that ‘what gets included and what gets excluded’ in the theory and practice of IR is not due to ‘natural’ or ‘obvious’ choices; instead, these are value judgments based on the interpreter’s commitments and biases. For most post-positivists, the primary activity of an IR theorist is “to reveal how policymakers and positivist IR theorists describe international events, act upon those descriptions as if they were natural, and then justify their actions and arguments in a self-fulfilling circle of codetermination” (Sterling-Folker, 2006, pp. 7-8).

### **Realism**

Realism was the dominant IR theory throughout the Cold War. Realism developed out of the perceived failure of Wilsonian idealism (Steigerwald, 1994), which dominated the interwar period (Fetherston, 1994a, p. 89). It takes states as the primary unit of analysis, with the main focus on territorial-based power politics. Mearsheimer and Alterman (2001, p. 36) argue that the great powers are assumed to be rational actors who take security as a ‘zero-sum’ game, giving rise to the ‘security dilemma’. The essence of the dilemma is that the measures a state takes to its security usually decrease the security of other states. Relative power is assigned causal omnipotence in the realist framework. All outcomes in the realist analysis (human rights violations, military intervention, etc.) ultimately depend on relative power, especially the military power of the actors involved. Sterling-Folker (2006, pp. 13-14) adds that an



absence of a central authority that can impose limits on the pursuit of sovereign interests is labeled as ‘anarchy’. Anarchy coupled with relative power gives rise to a behavioral pattern called ‘balance of power’ in which the relatively weak seek the *ability* to counter the relatively strong.

Realists see global politics as a perennial competition for power—the United States may be the most powerful state in the world, but it cannot change the nature of politics among nations. As a result, realists view ‘world peace’ as a chimera and are “generally pessimistic about the prospects for eliminating conflict and war” (Walt, 1998, p. 31).

The perspective of security as a fixed concept effectively closes doors for conflict resolution in the realist paradigm. Realists also downplay the role of institutions by considering them ‘empty vessels’ and ‘little more than ciphers for state power’ (Koremenos, Lipson, & Snidal, 2001, p. 762). A leading neorealist proponent Mearsheimer (2017, p. 7), asserts that “institutions have minimal influence on state behavior and thus hold little prospect for promoting stability in a post-Cold War period”. However, the challenges of creating and sustaining institutions are valid and persistent. Realists such as Walt (1998, p. 43) posit, “[...] although US leaders are adept at cloaking their actions in the lofty rhetoric of ‘world order’, naked self-interest lies behind most of them”. In blunt and simple words, realists assert that institutions are created by great powers as smokescreens to camouflage their sinister self-interest.

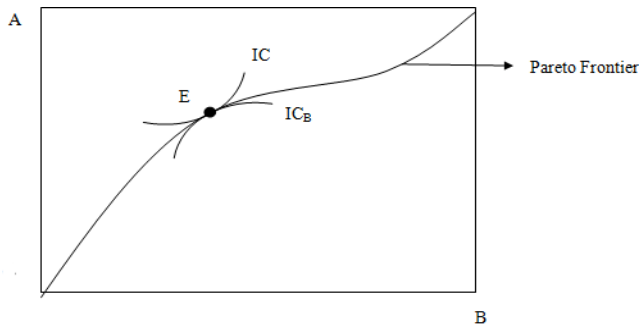
It is pertinent to discuss the conduct of American foreign policy from a realist perspective, which is currently the sole superpower. Mearsheimer and Alterman (2001, pp. 23-25) assert that realism’s central message — that the great powers should selfishly increase relative power — does not have broad appeal, especially to the American general public. Realism is, therefore, a hard sell to the American public. Hence, United States “leaders tend to portray war as a moral crusade or an ideological contest, rather than as a struggle for power”. This dichotomy necessitates a discernable gap (which) separates public rhetoric from the actual conduct of American foreign policy.

The realist paradigm divorces morality from politics. The Hobbesian/Machiavellian dictates of realism leave little or no place for morality or human rights in international politics. In light of this amoral interpretation of global politics, realists blast the concept of ‘American innocence’, as a snare. America’s siding with communist Stalin against the Third Reich and its subsequent dangling with Mao Tse-tung against the Soviet Union is termed by realists as not the action of an innocent nation.

### ***Realist Perspective on Peace Operations***

Denial of qualitative progress in the field of IR directly infringes on the peace operations in the realist paradigm (Sterling-Folker, 2006, p. 16). Realists such as Jervis (1999, p. 47) argue that much of international politics is “life on the Pareto frontier”, implying that states have already been able to cooperate to such an extent that no further moves can make all of them better off. The Pareto concept in the realist world can be elaborated with the help of the following diagram:

**Figure 1:** Pareto frontier through realist perspective



In Figure 1 above, if we assume only two countries, A and B, in a hypothetical world, the intersection of the indifference curves of the two countries on point E represents equilibrium in the realist world. Any deviation from this equilibrium will lead to a loss in the ‘utility’ of one or both countries, prompting the consideration of war between the two countries. The same analysis can be extrapolated to the ‘n’ number of countries in the real world.

After the end of the Cold War, realism suffered a temporary retreat from its dominant position in academic debates. However, realists have since come up with some interesting new perspectives. Of particular importance to peace operations, Barry Posen has offered a realist explanation for ethnic conflict, noting that ‘the breakup of multi-ethnic states could place rival ethnic groups in an anarchic setting, thereby triggering intense fears and tempting each group to use force to improve its relative position’ (Walt, 1998, p. 35).

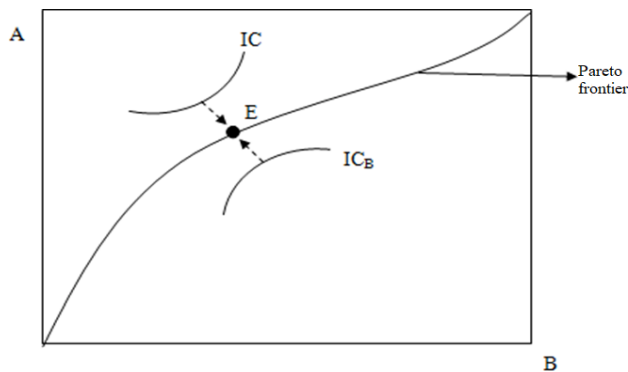
International anarchy advocated by realists implies that the demise of the Soviet Union has left the United States free to follow its whims. *Articles 1, 3, 5, and 6* of the NATO Charter stipulate that NATO is a purely defensive alliance. Similarly, *Article 53* of the UN Charter requires that regional organizations like NATO can be used to enforce peace only with the authorization of the Security Council. However, ‘anarchy’s effects are obvious in the ability of the United States and other NATO countries to flout the NATO Charter, ignore their obligations as United Nations members to obtain a Security Council resolution authorizing war, and disregard international norms against intervention in the domestic conflicts of other states (Adams, 2006, p. 25).

As the dominant state in the world, the United States has the greatest capability to take on peacekeeping, yet it also has the most significant capability to shirk such responsibilities. In line with the dictates of realism, when the Kosovo Force peacekeeping sectors were allocated, the United States could have chosen the “most sensitive” northern sector of Mitrovica, which borders Serbia. Instead, it decided on the southeast sector, which “appeared to be the easiest” (Adams, 2006, p. 30). Anarchy’s imprint is also evident in the de facto allegiance of contingent commanders in various peace operations to their respective governments, although they are supposedly under the command of an international institution (such as, NATO, UN, and AU).

### **Liberalism**

Liberalism is considered the primary theoretical competitor of realism in the positivist school of thought. In sharp contrast to the realist denial of qualitative progress in IR, liberalists profess faith “in at least the possibility of cumulative progress” in human affairs (Sterling-Folker, 2006, p. 55). Liberalists consider that many conflicts in world politics are unnecessary and avoidable. This unrealized cooperation results from failure to employ institutions, resulting in a prisoner’s dilemma or a market failure and producing suboptimal outcomes below the Pareto frontier for all concerned (Jervis, 1999, p. 47). This phenomenon has been explained in Figure 2 below:

**Figure 2:** Pareto Frontier, through a liberal perspective



As depicted above, there is a possibility of obtaining mutual gains by both countries A and B, cooperating and moving towards point E on the Pareto frontier. The same logic applies to the ‘n’ number of countries in the real world.

The cooperation literature in the liberal framework is based on the “Folk Theorem” (Ely & Välimäki, 2002), which shows that decentralized cooperation is possible in repeated games. However, since decentralized cooperation is difficult to achieve and is often brittle (owing to distribution and enforcement problems, large numbers, and uncertainty), states devise institutions to promote cooperation and make it more resilient. These institutions have been defined as “explicit arrangements, negotiated among international actors, that prescribe, proscribe, and/or authorize behavior” (Koremenos et al., 2001, pp. 764-766). The role of institutions in promoting peace is pivotal because they “can provide information, reduce transaction costs, make commitments more credible, establish focal points for coordination, and in general facilitate the operation of reciprocity” (Keohane & Martin, 1995, p. 42). Institutionalist liberals highlight the informational role of institutions in promoting transparency and believe that uncertainty or ‘noise’ is reduced through the punishment of ‘cheaters’ in the system. Cooperation is cited more easily in ‘low’ politics (e.g., economic, cultural, environmental), but liberals also believe in the gradual evolutionary development of cooperation in ‘high’ politics (securitization).

Liberal theorists such as Keohane and Martin (1995, p. 50) acknowledge that institutions are not always valuable or ‘constitute a panacea for violent conflict’. They recognize that considerable barriers exist to realizing collective action. Hence they assert that “institutions make a significant difference in conjunction with power realities” (p. 42). Liberal IR theorists consider that their emphasis is to explore the impediments to collective action with an underlying rationale that, in revealing such

barriers, it might also be possible to overcome them in the future (Sterling-Folker, 2006, p. 59).

### ***Liberalist Perspective on Peace Operations***

Bellamy and Williams (2004, p. 26) argue that from the outset, the theory and practice of peacekeeping have displayed a commitment to ideas about liberal peace by trying to maintain stable peace across the globe by promoting and defending liberal political and economic practices. In the Westphalian conception, the liberal ideology aimed at creating institutions and spaces for peaceful conflict resolution. In the post-Westphalian conception, however, emphasis has shifted towards the democratic-peace dividend which is a refinement of the earlier claim that democracies were inherently more peaceful than autocratic states. It rests on the argument by Walt (1998, p. 39) that although democracies seem to fight wars as often as other states, they rarely, if ever, fight one another. Successive American governments, especially since the end of the Cold War, have made spreading democracy around the world a pivotal foreign policy tenet.

Critics have, however, pointed out several qualifiers to this theory. First, states may be more prone to war when they are in the midst of a democratic transition, implying that efforts to export democracy might worsen things. Recent experiences in Palestine, Iraq, Iran, Venezuela, and Egypt are cited as support for the thesis that a US foreign policy that promotes democracy is misguided. Second, evidence that democracies do not fight each other is confined to the post-1945 era, and the absence of conflict in this period may be due more to their common interest in containing the *Red Threat* than to share democratic principles.

The public goods variant of liberalism provides important insights into the initiation and continuation of peace operations. It theorizes that intervention in deadly conflicts is impossible without the powerful states playing a significant role. This is because the smaller states tend either to 'free-ride' or consider the burdens of peacekeeping and peacebuilding as too large and the potential benefits too indirect for them to take action themselves (Boyer & Butler, 2006).

The institutional mechanism for peace operations is not a trouble-free phenomenon. As noted above, institutional peace operations create distributional, enforcement, and organizational problems. During the Kosovo campaign, US leaders became increasingly frustrated with what they saw in NATO as a 'war-by-committee'. The 2003 Iraq crisis demonstrated that even Belgium was willing to use NATO assets to block the will of the United States. The United States took NATO out of the war fighting business as a critical course correction but welcomed it in post-crisis peace support operations (Kay, 2006, pp. 72-73).

### ***Constructivism***

Realism and liberalism tend to focus on material factors such as power or trade, and constructivist approaches emphasize the impact of ideas (Walt, 1998, p. 40). The true genesis of constructivism lies at the end of the Cold War, which was a shock to both the realist and the liberal paradigms. Sterling-Folker (2006) argues that the most striking aspect of the theory is its transformational logic and the feasibility of rapid and radical change, symbolized by the title of the oft-quoted article: "Anarchy is what states make of it" (Wendt, 1992, p. 391). Contrary to realism, constructivists argue that actors are responsible for creating their security dilemmas and competitions by interacting with each other in ways that these outcomes appear inevitable. 'Security

dilemmas are not acts of God: they are effects of practice', argues Wendt (1995, p. 77).

Constructivist IR scholars have borrowed ideas from other disciplines (such as literature, linguistics, and sociology) to build the edifice of constructivism. Since identities and interests are socially constructed, constructivists believe that if actors in the international system were to start perceiving each other as friends instead of foes, the resultant outcomes could be very different. Even structures that the IR scholars typically take as 'given' or 'natural' (e.g. the Westphalian system and the sovereign nation-state) are not seen as immutable structures by the constructivists. They also explore the role of ideas, norms, culture, narratives, rhetoric, speech acts, and discourse as contributory factors in producing particular identities and interests. Constructivism has thus broadened IR theoretical debates by incorporating a philosophical and diverse range of topics within the discipline of international relations (Sterling-Folker, 2006).

Many constructivist scholars seek to occupy the middle ground between positivism and postpositivism. Sterling-Folker (2006, p. 118) further argues that constructivism seeks to legitimize 'certain subjects of inquiry that had either lain dormant in the discipline or had simply been ignored, such as collective identity formation and culture. Ruggie (1998), a leading proponent of constructivism, believes that scholars do not even possess an appropriate vocabulary that can help describe the new factors and forces that are transforming global politics in the digital age.

### ***Constructivist Perspective on Peace Operations***

Constructivists argue that international institutions (including peacekeeping institutions) play a vital, independent, and exogenous role in spreading global norms. They also contend that normative discourse is an important aspect of institutional life and that norms are contested within, and are sometimes propagated by, international institutions (Koremenos et al., 2001).

A crucial issue overlooked in the realist and liberal analyses of world politics is the issue of legitimation. A relational constructivist interpretation of peace operations would advocate that the debates and discourse involving various aspects of the peace process are (deliberately) framed in ways that shape, justify, reinforce or overturn opinions. United States policymakers merged the interventionist and humanitarian discourses to justify a violation of the sovereignty of nation-states in the Balkans in the 1990s. This led to what constructivists argue is a discourse of words enabling "bombing in the name of civilized humanity" (Jackson, 2006, pp. 146-147). Their argument is further reinforced by the fact that a similar, if not severe, humanitarian tragedy was allowed to occur in Rwanda in 1994 and subsequently in Darfur.

### ***Positivists and Peace Operations***

implications of the positivist theoretical frameworks for policymakers, including those involved in the peace processes, have been summed up by Walt (1998, p. 44), contending that "diplomat of the future should remain cognizant of realism's emphasis on the inescapable role of power, keep liberalism's awareness of domestic forces in mind, and occasionally reflect on constructivism's vision of change". A summary of the preceding arguments of the positivist theoretical paradigm in IR, along with the views of each positivist theoretical strand, is presented in tabular form below (adopted from Walt, 1998, p. 38):

**Table 1:** Summary of positivist IR theories

SUMMARY OF POSITIVIST IR THEORIES			
Competing Paradigms	Realism	Liberalism	Constructivism
<i>Main Theoretical Proposition</i>	Self-interested states compete constantly for power or security	Concern for power overridden by economic/political considerations (desire for prosperity, commitment to liberal values)	State behavior is shaped by elite beliefs, collective norms, and social identities; Transformational logic, Possibility of rapid, radical change
<i>Main Units of Analysis</i>	States	States	Individuals (especially elites)
<i>Main Instruments</i>	Economic and especially military power	Varies (international institutions, economic exchange, promotion of democracy)	Ideas and Discourse
<i>Modern Theorists</i>	Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz, John Mearsheimer	Michael Doyle, Robert Keohane	Alexander Wendt, John Ruggie
<i>Representative Modern Works</i>	Waltz, Theory of International Politics Mearsheimer, The Tragedy of Great Power Politics	Keohane, After Hegemony Fukuyama, "The End of History" (National Interest, 1989)	Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It" (Int'l Organization, 1992); Koslowski & Kratochwil, "Understanding Changes in Int'l Politics" (Int'l Organization, 1994)
<i>Post-Cold War Prediction</i>	A resurgence of overt great power competition	Increased cooperation as liberal values, free markets, and international institutions spread	Agnostic because it cannot predict the content of ideas
<i>Views regarding Peace Operations</i>	Mainly as a vehicle to advance great power interests 'Life on the Pareto frontier' closing doors for conflict resolution	As a symbol of growing cooperation among states can help move conflict states towards Pareto optimal outcomes	Emphasize the independent role of institutions; Ideas and discourse play important role in the success of peace operations
<i>Main Limitation</i>	Does not account for international change	Tends to ignore the role of power	Better at describing the past than anticipating the future

### ***Post-positivist Perspective on Peace Operations***

Post-positivists, especially since the 1990s, have theorized across a broad spectrum of issues about peace operations. The normative purposes and the ontology of peacebuilding have, in particular, been subjected to scrutiny by post-positivists. Galtung and Fischer (2013) posit that in societal terms, negative peace exists when personal, physical and direct violence is absent. Similarly, positive peace, on the other hand, exists when indirect or structural violence is absent. Radical feminists insist that

the absence of violence against women is included in the peace concept and that attainment of positive peace can help achieve gender balance in society. This conception is especially relevant to post-conflict reconstruction, peacebuilding, and stabilization phases of the peace processes (Brock-Utne, 1990).

### ***Critical Theories of Geopolitics and Media***

A critical variant of post-positivist theory in IR argues that “readings of world politics are heavily influenced, perhaps dictated, by visual stimuli” (Jervis, 1999). Thus, television pictures of peacekeepers distributing or guarding humanitarian assistance have more dramatic visual appeal than the ‘conflict trade’ responsible for perpetuating some conflicts in the first place. Subsequent dramatic representations are also made with the implicit purpose of mythologizing conflict and intervention. The *Black Hawk Down*, made with Pentagon support, had little to do with the Somalia and Somali people. On the contrary, it depicted the heroism of the US military in a ‘failed’ state and provided the ‘civilized’ watchers worldwide with a sense of “moral security in the attempt to respond to distant suffering” (Pugh, 2003, p. 109).

The war stories emanating from ‘embedded’ journalists or war-reporters ostensibly provided ‘security cover’ are also subjected to criticism by critical post-positivists. They raise an interesting question as to whether ‘war stories’ or ‘peacebuilding accounts’ dispatched by persons living with the peacekeepers/combatants on the ground, can be fair and impartial, especially keeping in view prolonged/selective exposure to a particular point of view and probable ‘conditioning’ of these journalists.

Critical theories of geopolitics point out the ‘idealized’ and ‘denounced’ versions of one of the core dimensions of peace operations — its neutrality. Pugh (2003, p. 110) also posits that peacekeepers are eulogized in the ‘idealized’ version for remarkably exhibiting no declared interest in outcomes. In the ‘denounced’ understanding of the same concept, to be neutral is tantamount to standing by in an amoral vacuum when ‘natural’ justice cries out for the protection of the ‘innocent’—thereby justifying ‘choices’ to be made for ethical world order. Time to contemplate again: whose ethics and whose world order?

### ***Implications of Postpositivists for Peace Operations***

The post-positivist perspectives on peace operations should be seen as a welcome development in the evolution of the theory of peace operations. These should be taken as a challenging riposte to the existing theorization in the field of peacekeeping (Pugh, 2003). A critical evaluation and absorption of the various post-positivist strands can ultimately help mature the nascent theory of peacekeeping for the increasingly demanding peace operations envisaged for conflict zones in the 21st century.

### ***Analysis***

The above discussion leads to the analysis that different theoretical frameworks exist, propounding different perspectives on peace operations. The positivist theories encapsulate realism, liberalism, and constructivism, while the post-positivist includes feminism and critical theories of media and geopolitics. Realism perceives peace operations as a tool used by strong power and smaller states to pursue vested interests and agendas. Realists also consider peace operations as a by-product of conflict. Liberalists believe peace operations serve as a tool for cooperation among states and help states determine their needs and define their interests through mutually agreed



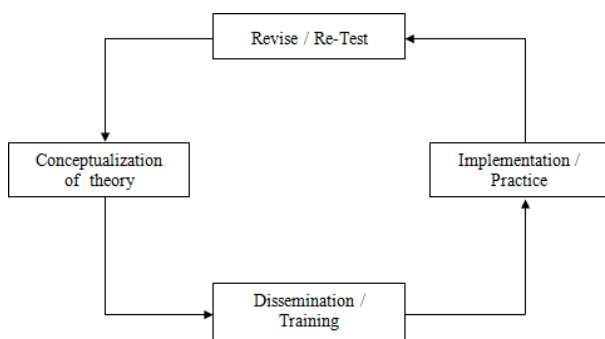
diplomatic perceptions. At the same time, according to constructivists, ideas and norms play an imperative role in the success of peacekeeping operations, which means targeting and accessing the prevalent mind-set, ideas, and norms that paved the way for conflict. Constructivists also stress redefining the way forward towards positive peace through dialogue. Feminists are staunch supporters of positive peace, which is reckoned as sustainable and long-lasting peace, to attain gender balance in society. The theories of media highlight the role of media in molding public perception regarding peace operations through strategic communication and urging states to participate in these operations. According to theories of geopolitics, peace operations are a tool for states to promote their ideologies and agendas in other states and influence militarily and economically strategic territories. The post-positivist theories, i.e., feminism, media, and geopolitics, are a new and positive development giving a new dimension to the theoretical framework of peace operations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. All these positivists and post-positivist theories can greatly help dig deeper into the motives and implications of peace operations.

Though this study will go a long way in filling the theoretical gap in peace operation studies, bridging this gap would be inefficacious if the practical aspect is subsided and neglected. So, the training of peacekeepers stands paramount in this regard and plays an important role in bridging theory and practice. Further analysis regarding the importance of training to link theory with the approach is below.

### ***Training as a Bridge between Theory and Practice***

Apart from integrating peace operations into major theoretical frameworks of International Relations, it is equally important to link the theory of peacekeeping with the practice thereof. The training of peacekeepers is a critical factor in this process. Unfortunately, the training of peacekeepers continues to suffer from conceptual ambiguity and practical incoherence. In most cases, it is not even considered worthwhile to adjust the peacekeepers from an essentially ‘military/combat’ culture to a ‘third party/peace support’ culture. Training of peacekeepers in a coherent and organized fashion carries the potential of not only fulfilling the dissemination of guiding principles for successful third-party intervention; it can also serve as a vital link in the testing, revision, and polishing of the conceptual basis of peace operations.

**Figure 3:** The cyclical development of the theory and practice of peace operations



The cyclical development of the theory and practice of peace operations has been visually represented in the above figure (Fetherston, 1994b). The conceptual analysis



leads to training refinements, which leads to practice changes. These changes then spark revision and re-testing, providing crucial feedback into the conceptualization process. The need for a flexible theoretical foundation for peace operations with built-in provisions for constant re-evaluation of the on-going peacebuilding enterprise, in light of practical feedback from peacekeepers on the ground, cannot be over-emphasized. It is only through such an exercise that workable and effective exit strategies can be arrived at.

In the absence of a sound link between training and practice of peacekeeping, the effect of the peace operations on the conflict process itself is, as yet, a moot question. As argued by Fetherston (1994b, p. 210), one should not rule out the possibility that “by intervening as a third party and then lacking in third-party skills needed to facilitate settlement and resolution, peacekeeping prolongs conflict, further polarizes warring factions, and adds to economic and social problems by creating dependency”.

## Conclusion

This research has demonstrated that multiple and equally legitimate perspectives exist on peace operations, thereby revealing the inherently political nature of peace operations. For example, the realist school of thought believes that peacekeeping operations are tools that the superpower and other states use to pursue their vested interests and agendas. Liberalists consider peacekeeping operations as a tool for increased cooperation among states. Constructivists believe that the role of ideas and norms is paramount in the success of peace operations, which means targeting and addressing the prevalent norms and ideas that paved the way for conflict. The feminists staunchly support positive peace for attaining gender balance in society. The theories of media regarding peace operations highlight the role of media in molding public perception and urging states to engage in peace operations, while the theories of geopolitics reflect the competition among states in promoting their ideologies and influencing militarily and economically strategic territories through peace operations. The research findings can serve the purpose of filling a theoretical gap in peace operations studies. Roland Paris is of the view that ‘building the study of peace missions into a mature academic subfield will require a concerted effort to move beyond the current preoccupation with practical operational issues and, instead, to use these missions as windows into larger phenomena of international politics’ (De Coning & Peter, 2019). Moreover, training of the peacekeepers stands paramount and can serve as a bridge to link the theory of peacekeeping with practice.

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# Analyzing United States *Pivot to Asia* and China's Global Rebalancing through Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

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## Abstract

This article focuses on ‘Pivot to Asia’ and ‘Belt and Road Initiative’ (BRI) as two competing paradigms defining the great power relations in the evolving regional and global order. The article is based on the premise that a dialectic relationship exists between the United States and China, manifested through the *pivot* to Asia and global rebalancing by China. The paper investigates the contours of both strategies using the theoretical framework of hegemonic stability theory to provide empirical answers to the assertive behavior of the United States as the status-quo power and China as the rising power. The central argument of the paper revolves around the renewed United States strategic focus in the Indo-Pacific, which is creating perceptions of containment in China. In doing so, the article investigates the evolving power dynamics and role of the United States in shaping the strategies and alliances among the regional actors and Chinese counterbalance strategies through economic incentives and developmental projects such as BRI. The research is an original contribution to unveiling the saga of the United States *pivot* to Asia and counterbalance by China for enhancing their spheres of influence in maintaining hegemony.

## Keywords

Pivot to Asia, containment, rebalancing, Belt and Road Initiative, China, USA

## Introduction

Like every imaginative space, the Indo-Pacific region is the construct of contested interpretations (Das, 2019). The academic literature defining the Indo-Pacific region focuses on the countries and islands *in* and *around* the western Pacific Ocean: the Pacific islands, south-east Asia and up into Japan and China (Galloway, 2021). The region has immense geopolitical and geo-economic significance as it holds 60% of global wealth, 3/5<sup>th</sup> of the world's population and an intense demonstration of great power's competition (Rajagopalan, 2022).

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The Indo-Pacific region in recent times has remained under sharp focus and interest for the status-quo and rising powers to an unprecedented level due to its proximity to highly industrialized Northeast Asia, the Australian continent, the Indian subcontinent, and the oil and gas-rich region of the Middle East. The Straits and Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs) in the Far East region also assume great importance due to the heavy flow of traffic for interstate trade and oil imports from the Middle East (Andrews-Speed & Len, 2016). Keeping the international SLOCs open has attained superior strategic orientation from the United States national security perspective; therefore, reprioritizing preference from military alone to economic incentives. The United States has repeatedly pronounced that it would not accept trade disruption in the South China Sea (Noer & Gregory, 1996). In May 1995, Secretary of State Warren Christopher once again warned that the divergent claims over Spratly reefs should not disrupt the SLOCs (Noer & Gregory, 1996).

Since the end of World War II, the United States has maintained a military presence in this region with varying intentions, generally unclear. However, it is felt that this presence brought immense stability to the war-ravaged region, as the United States unstinted commitment to the reconstruction of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and even China resulted in an economic turnaround for these countries and the entire region at large (Zagoria, 2015). Since the reforms and opening up of China led by Deng Xiaoping in 1978, the last three decades witnessed an unprecedented economic leap forward, which rightly placed China at the global center stage as the second largest economy after the United States (Cheng, 2019).

The peaceful rise of China amid varying interpretations has generated intense debates across the globe and has placed China as a competitor of the United States. In the contemporary international order, both China and the United States are influential players and contributors to global governance; therefore, their bilateral relationship is far more significant today than ever before. China-US relations are complex and often delicate, featuring a multitude of critical issues that both countries must navigate together as miscalculations could spell catastrophe (Hachigian, 2015, p. 63).

China's economic cum political rise is interpreted as a serious challenge to post-World War II international order and a direct threat to the status quo power, i.e. the United States. At the same time, the region lacks effective structures for cooperative security and mechanisms to contain conflict in case of any miscalculation (Amt, 2021). Realizing the strategic vacuum provided to China due to involvement in Afghanistan and the Middle East and the impact of costly unending wars, the United States announced 'Pivot to Asia' Strategy in 2011 to bolster the multidimensional relations with the countries of the Indo-Pacific region (Lieberthal, 2011). In the argument of maintaining hard-earned freedom of navigation, the regional countries are encouraged to follow the pattern of the United States, which is creating friction with China and causing heightened tension. It is highly appreciable that both China and the United States have rationally managed the controversial issues of the South China Sea by adopting restraint and accommodation.

Realizing the challenges of possible containment, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced the vision of constructing the 'Silk Road Economic Belt' in September 2013 during his address at Nazarbayev University Kazakhstan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PRC, 2013) and '21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road' (Ling, 2018, p. 1) in October 2013 during his address to Indonesian Parliament. Both later transformed into 'Belt and Road Initiative' (BRI) (State Council, PRC, 2017, p. 1). The Chinese

government issued a White Paper in 2015 highlighting the conceptual dimensions and implementation of the BRI. From the Chinese perspective, the BRI can help “economic prosperity of countries and the regions along the road, strengthen exchanges between civilizations and promote peace and development for the benefit of people around the world” (National Development and Reforms Commission, 2015, p. 1).

The alternate views have also been frequently expressed by scholars on the Chinese motivations behind BRI. It serves as a counterbalance against the *pivot* to Asia and a possible option for China to develop new investment opportunities for increasing spheres of influence (Chatzky & McBride, 2020; Zhou & Esteban, 2018). From the Chinese perspective, BRI has positively attracted many countries covering all the regions due to the potential benefits of common development and prosperity. The report published in 2016 by ‘Fung Business Intelligence’ highlighted that 64 countries are willing to participate in the mega developmental project (Chin & He, 2016), which has been vindicated by the World Bank report as well: “70 countries signed up for joining the initiative, containing 65% of world’s population and one-third of world’s gross domestic product (GDP)” (The World Bank, 2018, n.d.). The number has reached 126 countries and 29 international organizations (Xinhua, 2019).

To alleviate the rising concerns about Chinese intentions and future geopolitical aspects related to BRI appearing in the media, the Chinese government issued comprehensive policy guidelines in 2015 titled ‘Vision and actions on jointly building Belt and Road’ (Xinhua, 2017). Elizabeth. C. Economy writes that “under President Xi Jinping, China now actively seeks to shape the international norms and institutions and forcefully asserts its presence on the global stage” (Chatzky & McBride, 2020, p. 1). In the same context, it is further added that for President Xi Jinping, the BRI serves as a pushback against the United States *pivot* to Asia (Chatzky & McBride, 2020). Since 2013, extensive and often contrasting debates have been taking place on the Chinese BRI and the United States *pivot* to Asia with varying perspectives. Substantial literature is available on both *pivot* to Asia vis-à-vis BRI. However, a literature gap exists in comparative analyses of competing strategies, defining great power relations. In doing so, the dialectic relationship between these opposing strategies has been examined by providing answers to the following research questions:

- What conceptual contours and manifestations of the United States *pivot* to Asia, Indo-Pacific, and QUAD alliance?
- What are the motivations behind China-led BRI, and how is it manifested on the ground?
- How are the United States and Chinese strategies creating great powers’ competition in the Indo-Pacific region to enhance their sphere of influence?

### Research Context and Methodology

The Last two decades have witnessed intense competition between the status quo power USA and rising power China, vying for regional dominance and rewriting the rules of international order (Loke, 2021). The United States military involvement in Afghanistan and the Middle East in the aftermath of the 9/11 incidents provided an uninterrupted opportunity for China to rise economically and earn the rightful position as the world’s second-largest economy after the United States. Since then, Chinese military modernization plans and assertive behavior in the Indo-Pacific region on the premise of core national interests have generated intense debate on

changing patterns of Chinese behavior. The United States is concerned about the rising national power of China; therefore, it introduced a series of strategies like 'Pivot to Asia', the Indo-Pacific Strategy and the QUAD alliance containing military cum economic incentives for allies and partners aimed at putting caution on China (Mahapatra, 2018). The United States National Security Strategy (USNSS) 2018 declaring great power's competition with China vindicated the Chinese perception of containment (Galdorisi, 2019). Realizing the potential of containment, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced BRI as a global rebalancing to counterbalance United States strategies through soft power and economic incentives (Beeson, 2018). This paper identifies the evolving trends in the Indo-Pacific region leading toward great power competition, i.e. between the United States and China.

This research is explanatory in nature and employed qualitative research methods using secondary data. Official statements, transcripts, white papers, and articles have been analyzed to develop and substantiate the arguments. Due to the evolving trends of intense competition between the USA and China in the Indo-Pacific to assert domination and maintain hegemony, this article critically examines the competing strategies and their dialectical relationships. The period of the last two decades, from September 2001 to September 2021, has been considered for analyzing the strategies and policies of the two countries. In this period, the United States has demonstrated enhanced attention towards the Indo-Pacific region with the contention of imposing caution over the assertive behavior of China and its expanding influence in the region. The paper investigates the contours of both strategies using the theoretical framework of hegemonic stability theory to critically assess the assertive behavior of the United States as the status-quo power and China as the rising power.

### **The Hegemonic Stability Theory**

There is a great degree of geopolitics at play in the Indo-Pacific region with a renewed focus on United States foreign policy in the region, especially after the announcement of the 'Pivot to Asia'. After President Donald Trump assumed office, three policy documents highlighted key priority areas, i.e. 'United States National Security Strategy 2018', 'Defense Strategic Guidance and Indo-Pacific Strategy' (Pant & Parpiani, 2020). All three have made the Indo-Pacific the fulcrum of the United States attention. However, from the Chinese perspective, the BRI provides a mechanism for enhancing its sphere of influence by demonstrating cooperative engagement through economic incentives as new norms of international relations (Huang, 2016). Therefore, the evolving regional landscape demonstrates great powers' competition (i.e., between China and the United States), where both *forces* are vying to enhance their sphere of influence through assertive behavior and contrasting strategies.

The hegemonic stability theory exemplifies the established ascendancy of a hegemonic power, which in this case is the status-quo power of the United States that would decide the rules of the game for prevalent global order by using different foreign policy tools like economic coercion, diplomacy, military and persuasion (Charles, 1973, p. 8). The hegemonic stability theory postulates that unmatched economic and political power must exist, where essential features of large economies are backed up by technological sophistication. One postulate of this theory describes the innovative foreign policy by the status-quo power for maintaining a dominant role in the global arena to retain its hegemonic status apart from serving self-interest (Charles, 1973, p. 4). Another dimension of the theory envisions that the prevailing



hegemon offers a tremendous amount of public goods that are rationally distributed among the states in the existing regional and international system (Keohane, 2005, p. 135). The United States and China are promising tremendous economic incentives through the *pivot* to Asia and BRI to demonstrate soft power for public goods.

The theory describes power turf, the hierarchy of nations in international politics with the fluctuating intensity of competition and cooperation (Tammen et al., 2017, p. 17) and bifurcates the difference between domestic and international environments by assuming that global politics is integrated both vertically and horizontally (Kim & Gates, 2015). Additionally, the static and dynamic factors affecting the structure of the international system also help to investigate the underlying causes of transition and change that occurs in the international system (Werner & Kugler, 1996).

It is important to note that the growth rate and its impact on relative power distribution among the states reshape interstate relations by forming new economic and (or) political entities (Tammen et al., 2017, p. 19). When the growth in accumulative power reaches a certain level, and when rising power is in apposition to challenge the dominant hegemon, there are strong possibilities that a conflict may occur, as increasing power has acquired the requisite means to challenge under extensive pressure applied by the dominant power. Such scenarios appeared from several policy statements of the United States officials and matching responses from the Chinese officials. Such developments may create environments of discontent, where rising power feels dissatisfied with the prevalent status quo; therefore, a potential conflict is likely to happen (Tammen et al., 2011, p. 59). Both 'Pivot to Asia' and 'BRI' provide substantial economic incentives for public goods, providing alternate power transition philosophy through economic incentives and cooperative engagement.

### **United States 'Pivot to Asia' and Indo-Pacific Strategies**

On 17 November 2011, President Obama announced a major foreign policy shift from the Middle East to the Asia-Pacific region while addressing the Australian Parliament. He emphasised that the "United States will play a larger and long-term role in reshaping this region and its future by upholding core principles and in close partnership with allies" (Remarks by President Obama to the Australian Parliament, 2011). Also, in 2011, the United States Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, announced 'America's Pacific Century'. Her statement aptly enunciated the core strategic message demonstrated by the shift in the regional priorities that the future of politics will be decided in Asia-Pacific and not in Afghanistan or Iraq, and the United States will be right at the centre of actions (Clinton, 2011). The strategy later transformed into a *pivot* or rebalancing towards Asia-Pacific. Therefore, this region characterized the future *pivot* of global geopolitics, as major powers' competition for domination emerged due to China's rise. On the positive side, the United States has appreciated China's peaceful rise; however, the Chinese intentions for peace remain suspicious due to its assertive role in disputed regions of the North and South China Sea, military modernization plans and transforming defense policy to 'active defense'. China's increase in the defense budget, development of missiles and strategic capabilities are worrisome developments that the United States cannot ignore (Davidson, 2014, p. 3).

The Indo-Pacific region has been anticipated as the future economic center of gravity (Schiavenza, n.d.). The United States presence in this region after a victory in World War II and allocation of funds like the Marshal Plan in Europe provided



security, stability, development, and economic assistance that facilitated the post-war recovery of Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Taiwan. Realizing the vast potential, the United States committed to renewed engagement and focused on the Indo-Pacific region (Wang, 2016, p. 81). Former United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton gave the rationale that “just as Asia is critical to America’s future, an engaged America is vital to Asia’s future” (Clinton, 2011, n.d.). By virtue of its unique geographical disposition, the United States is an unfathomable Pacific and Atlantic power; therefore, it is in an exceptional position to build a multifaceted partnership with the regional countries unswerving with core values (Lieberthal, 2011).

The United States recognizes the enormous potential promised by the Asia-Pacific region. By its deployment in the region and exceptional diplomatic and military relations with most ASEAN countries, the necessity to *pivot* to Asia has become a reality through collaborative engagement with the regional countries and organisations (Bower et al., 2015). Hillary Clinton described the region as a ‘fulcrum’ for comprehensively building the multipronged security and economic engagement model in consonance with ‘forward deployed diplomacy’ for long-term and sustainable cooperation with the regional countries (Clinton, 2010). The *pivot’s* important component is the United States military modernization plans to bring the military capabilities of regional countries to a level of strong deterrence. The military components of the *pivot* contain the enhanced military deployment in Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean and the deployment of Littoral combat ships to Singapore (Kato & Shimbun, n.d., p. 5).

Additionally, the robust engagement with allies in South East Asia and the Indian Ocean region is also the focus of the *pivot*. The United States has declined Chinese sovereignty over islands, reefs and Spratly archipelago and has stressed the hard-earned freedom of navigation. The evolving situation created a diplomatic row as China reacted swiftly to the United States intentions of military containment (Rose & Brunnstorm, 2015).

Former United States Secretary of Defense, Mr Leon E. Panetta, promulgated policy guidelines for manifesting military components of *pivot* named ‘Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense’. It highlights the military-level engagements with regional countries, including deployment of additional forces, joint military exercises, and capacity building of allies for increasing the United States’ influence in the region (Panetta & Obama, 2012, p. 3). Addressing Shangri-La Dialogue Singapore in 2013, Former United States Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel elaborated on the contours of rebalancing, containing the deployment of military assets to enhance partnership and posture with rotational deployments in the Pacific region (US-China Institute, n.d.). Additionally, the United States has deployed P-8 Poseidon surveillance aircraft in Singapore to serve as a deterrence against China’s assertive role in the South China Sea (Dyer, 2015, p. 1). The Singapore and the United States military cooperation pact was also formalized during Singapore’s Defense Minister Ng En Hen’s visit to Pentagon aimed at capacity building and enduring stability in the region (Yong, 2015). The Chinese government has reacted to such developments by stating, “such cooperation will militarize the region” (Yong, 2015, n.d.). The United States also committed US\$19.7 million for capacity building of the Philippine Coast Guard (Misalucha, 2014) and also Vietnam’s Navy and Coast Guard (Ton, 2018, p. 4).

The controversies surrounding the *pivot* to Asia have been going on since 2011; the conclusion can be drawn as enhanced economic cooperation, refuting China's rise, rebalancing the regional alliances, and redefining the rules of the game in the Asia-Pacific region with a more assertive outlook (Oehler-Sincai, 2016, p. 13). Such overtures highlight the United States intentions to restrain China's behavior as it is perceived as the biggest threat to the world order and wants to rewrite the rules of business and drive the United States out of the Asia-Pacific region (Burns & Lee, 2020). Therefore, while contradictory assessments and responses have been appearing from time to time, it is widely agreed that the *pivot* strategy created heightened tension in the region due to the perceived containment of China (Ford, 2017). The Trump administration has issued a comprehensive defense policy document termed the 'Indo-Pacific Strategy Report', amplifying the future intentions towards the Asia-Pacific region. The strategy builds on continuing obligations to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific region, where all nations are safe and able to follow economic development paths with recognized international norms, rules, and fair competition.

The United States believes that under the communist party, China pursues the path to reorder the region to its benefit by leveraging military modernization plans, influence operations, and predatory economics to coerce other nations (Shanahan, 2019). The report also highlights that the Indo-Pacific region today is challenged by a more assured and emphatic China that is prepared to admit friction in the quest for a more expansive set of economic, security, and political interests (Shanahan, 2019). The Indo-Pacific strategy document formalizes the United States future economic and military engagement in this region to safeguard national security interests and restrain China from assertive posturing. Therefore, the Hegemonic Stability theory validates the accepted dominance of hegemonic power; the United States, which through *pivot* to Asia, aims to dictate the rules of the game by using tools like; economic incentives, diplomacy, coercion, and persuasion. Another contention of this theory highlights that status quo power offers an incredible volume of public goods, manifested by the economic incentives of the *pivot*. Additionally, when the growth in accumulative power reaches a level where rising power is in apposition to challenge the status quo power, there are strong possibilities that a conflict may occur, as rising power has acquired the requisite means to challenge under extensive pressure applied by the dominant power. This is evident from several policy statements of the United States' officials and matching responses from the Chinese officials.

However, despite apparent stability and cooperative engagement among the countries of the Indo-Pacific region, the turf war for enhancing the sphere of influence between the United States and China has generated the cold war mentality of zero-sum and negative competition by the United States and its allies. United States 'National Security Strategy' (NSS, 2018) signifies major power competition with China and Russia as new paradigms of United States national security concerns and priorities, which has created anxiety among the analysts of international security and China alike. While the situation has been handled pragmatically, the possibility of miscalculations and unprovoked reactions remains. The United States, on the behest of alliance obligations, is embarked upon creating a network of alliances aimed at containing China and giving flip to regional hot spot issues (Ishaque et al., 2017b). Such a calibrated instability in the name of creating a free and transparent Indo-Pacific region, maintaining freedom of navigation, providing explicit support to secessionist tendencies against the core national interests of China (Ishaque et al.,

2017a), and launching an unprovoked trade war are some of the concerns causing instability in the region. Resultantly, the United States is attempting to retain and maintain its hegemony in the Indo-Pacific region through enhanced military deployment, economic incentives for public goods, and coercive military maneuvers (hence, generating the perception of containment by China).

### **The BRI and China's Expanding Influence**

The peaceful rise of China is momentous in the contemporary international order. China has also transformed the traditional pattern of interstate relations by professing catchphrases like: "shared destiny, common development, and peaceful coexistence." China has reiterated that peaceful development is not China-specific but for the world at large and in service to humanity. China expounds development of the countries and regions through win-win cooperation. President Xi Jinping underlined to steadfastly follow the path of peaceful development and pursue a win-win strategy of opening up. President Xi also highlighted that Chinese development is not confined to the benefit of China only but also caters to the world (Xiaosi, 2013). To understand the dream of collective opulence of humankind, the Chinese BRI is a demonstration of regional connectivity and greater economic integration that had prevailed in the past in the form of the ancient silk route and boosted the succor of relevant countries, regions and the world at large.

President Xi Jinping announced the strategic vision of the 'Silk Road Economic Belt' in September 2013 during his visit to Kazakhstan. Speaking on the theme of 'Promote people-to-people friendship and creating a better future' at Nazarbayev University, he specified the cardinal aspects of building the 'Silk Road Economic Belt' for enhancing regional connectivity, people-to-people contact and exchange of civilizations for the eventual benefit of mankind (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PRC, 2013). President Xi capitalized on the momentum generated in his Central Asian trip by proposing the '21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road' (Jiao & Yunbi, 2013) during his speech to the Indonesian Parliament in October 2013. He also highlighted that China-ASEAN relations are monumental in contemporary regional order and accentuated the shared destiny of China and ASEAN countries. The original vision of 'Silk Road Economic Belt' and '21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road' gradually transformed into 'One Belt One Road' and later to BRI (Stanzel, 2017) to give it a more inclusive outlook containing comprehensive networks of roads, corridors, infrastructure development, special economic zones, ports, shipping hubs to name a few.

The BRI embraces two components. The land-built road is called the 'New Silk Road', and the sea-based feature is referred to as the '21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road'. Additionally, six Economic Corridors (Derudder et al., 2018, p. 1) are also planned to enhance connectivity with relevant countries and regions. The government of China allocated US\$ 40 billion and another US\$ 100 billion to Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) for Silk Road Fund. Since the unveiling of the BRI, intense debates have surfaced on the possible motives and future orientations of China.

The lack of a comprehensive road map in 2014 and 2015 generated suspicions about how China would undertake such an ambitious plan and how such a massive investment would remain confined to the noble intent of serving humanity, as it is against historical precedents. Recognizing the information vacuum, the Chinese government issued policy guidelines titled 'On Actions for Jointly Building Belt and Road' (National Development and Reforms Commission, 2015). While the Chinese

official framework is understandable, the debate on the possible motives of China's peaceful rise and what sort of international order China professes occupies the discussion and analyses across the globe. Western media, scholars, and think tanks perceive the BRI as a disquieting extension of China's expanding influence with geopolitical motives (Kuo & Tang, 2015, p. 1). The United States also shares the apprehension of some Asian countries that the BRI might be a Trojan horse for regional progress and military modernization plans for China (Chatzky & McBride, 2020). President Trump has also voiced apprehensions about Chinese motivations regarding the BRI and has branded it as a tool of geopolitics for enhancing spheres of influence, but has remained deficient in offering an alternative economic vision. The Chinese officials are reasonably sensitive to deleterious interpretations of the Belt and Road, especially the geopolitical aspects like Marshall Plan. Therefore, they have been trying to mitigate the negative perceptions attached to this project during their regular interactions.

The Chinese government's mission to European Union has formalized specific answers to the above apprehensions by stating that BRI has no geopolitical ambitions as based on ethics of equivalent consultation, joint collaborations, and shared benefits by respecting the sovereign choice and inclinations of other countries, ensuring openness, transparency and aligning the project with the developmental schemes of other members. The cardinal aspects of the BRI comprise economic collaboration, people-to-people exchanges, enhanced trade, improved connectivity, and infrastructure development (Mission of People's Republic of China to European Union, 2015).

The Chinese strategic planners assume that BRI is an important milestone for leading China to a strategic opportunity that is essential for China's development *itself*. However, the journey looks bumpy and full of hurdles as BRI has generated anxiety about China's hidden motives. The transparency, therefore, warranted publishing full details to undo misapprehensions. The possible reasons can be; (i) ambiguity of BRI's goals and approaches due to the non-availability of an implementation framework; (ii) the nature of BRI when viewed in the context of a more assertive role of China in safeguarding core national interests and (iii) rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and its possible misinterpretations (Zhang, 2018, p. 329). To undo such apprehensions, President Xi Jinping advocates building a harmonious world through win-win cooperation and creating a community with shared destiny and a prosperous future.

Therefore, Chinese officials believe that BRI is means of stimulating common development through consultations and joint efforts. It is an important part of China's global strategy intended to maintain a favorable environment for China's enduring development, which is critical to realizing its strategic goal to continue developing and attain the status of great power consistent with the norms of international order and aspirations of the Chinese nation. Through the BRI, China has professed common development and complex interdependence to create shared destiny and a shared future through win-win cooperation. However, it is essential to note that such a model already exists in the existing regional and international systems (Keohane, 2005, p. 135), validated by *hegemonic stability theory*. Another postulate of the mentioned pronounces novel foreign policy for maintaining a dominant role, which BRI fulfills for China and also an attempt by the Chinese government to collaborate with the willing countries and struggling economies, thereby enhancing the sphere of influence. It is argued that the interstate relations in

today's global order may not necessarily be regulated by anarchy but most probably centered on need satisfaction (Danilovic & Clare, 2007). Therefore, BRI covers more than 60 countries traversing all the continents, and a dedicated financial support mechanism through the Asian Infrastructure Bank (AIB) not only radiates the soft power of China but also helps in breaking the perceived containment by the United States in the Indo-Pacific region by global rebalancing through economic collaborations and investments.

### **Reshaping and Rebalancing the International System**

The analyses of *pivot* and BRI under the framework of hegemonic stability lead us to conclude that both the United States and China are asserting dominance in their own perspectives in the Indo-Pacific region. The United States recognizes that the period of hegemony and supremacy is gradually fading due to China's increased economic and strategic challenges. The United States does not want to concede to China and simultaneously reassure its partners of unstinted commitment to alliance obligations in the face of Chinese hegemonic ambitions. The regional countries have strong military and economic relations with the United States, but at the same time, China has also successfully increased economic interdependence due to its geo-strategic location. The economic interdependence matrix is creating more dilemmas for the United States policy planners as the regional countries also want to continue their economic engagement with China avoiding conflict or negative competition.

The *pivot* to Asia has overwhelming military dimensions aimed at creating strong deterrence against China from asserting in disputed regions of the North and South China Sea and maintaining hard-earned freedom of navigation. However, the BRI has emerged as a vision of connectivity across the continents, covering land and sea transportation with mega investment estimated to be over US\$ 4-8 trillion connecting China to Europe, Africa, and the more expansive Asia-Pacific region with enormous potential of extending spheres of influence. Therefore, the *pivot* provided leverage to the United States to contain China, while BRI provided means to China as an alternative to global rebalancing against the *pivot* to Asia (Chen, 2014). The Chinese government has also attempted to capitalize on its civilizational roots of the ancient Silk Road and replicate BRI on the same scheme, manifesting China's grand strategy indicating great power status, which is contributing to common development and global governance through win-win cooperation, avoiding Thucydides' trap and competition with the United States. China and the United States are concerned about each other's intentions, hence, trying to hedge against each other for domination through rebalance and counterbalance strategies. The United States policymakers strongly feel that China is a potential 'threat' that will discount the United States from the region (Lungu, n.d., p. 1). Nevertheless, it can be argued that both status-quo and rising powers are asserting to maintain hegemony.

The success or failure of BRI is too early to predict; however, it contains consequences as the United States has a range of interests at stake, from immediate commercial opportunities to ensuring the viability and stability of global systems in the long term (Hillman, 2018). The BRI will elevate China as an economic and political power in the world which may result in outlasting the United States from the Indo-Pacific region (Zongyi, 2019, p. 65). Such a paradigm shift will reduce the United States influence against China, which is an improbable proposition and unacceptable to the United States in times to come. Therefore, the Trump

Administration has announced a multipronged Indo-Pacific strategy, and President Biden's NSS will revoke the Chinese influence and aspirations of global hegemony.

## Conclusion

In the evolving global and regional order, Indo-Pacific has emerged as the epicenter of great power competition due to competing strategies unveiled by the United States and China. The *pivot* to Asia was an attempt by the United States to realign strategic priorities back to Asia-Pacific after two decades of over-commitment in Afghanistan and the broader Middle East. Despite an all-encompassing vision comprising economic and military components, the perception of the *pivot* is that the United States attempts to increase influence in the region to counterbalance China. The inherent interpretation of such a policy shift was containment of China and putting some caution on the assertive Chinese role in the disputed islands and issues of freedom of navigation. The strategic effects envisaged by such policy were to change the behavior of China and dissuade the position of a 'competitor'. The subsequent policies like the 'United States Defense Strategic Guidance' and 'Indo-Pacific Strategy' vindicate the above apprehensions of China's containment.

Similarly, BRI radiates the perception of hegemon in making as China seeks to expand their influence in the region. China's assertive movements were demonstrated by challenging the United States on freedom of navigation and sovereignty issues of disputed islands. China's ambitions for regional influence are also manifested through the multilateralism approach, which the country has prudently managed. China and the United States are vying to assert their influence with varying degrees of manifestation. Therefore, it has become dialectic of opposing *wills*, where both hegemonies claim positions. The contemporary era is characterized by economic globalization and complex interdependence; therefore, cooperative engagement and mutual trust are crucial to moving forward for the eventual benefit of countries, regions, and the world at large. China and the United States have to work together to ensure the stability of the international system through trust-building and economic engagement.

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# Countering/Preventing Violent Extremism in Nigeria, Somalia, and Pakistan: A Comparative Analysis

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## Abstract

After a two-decade-long War on Terror (WoT), the world still faces the threat of violent extremism and terrorism. The persistent presence and spread of violent extremism have attracted academic and policy debate on countering the threat. The deep roots of violent extremism are embedded in the state fragility, where extremist elements have exploited the political, economic, socio-cultural and security fault lines in their own favor. The efficacy of kinetic means has undoubtedly resulted in averting the threat; however, there is a need to have a long-term policy to counter and prevent violent extremism by addressing its root causes. With regards, this paper analyses the cases of Nigeria, Somalia, and Pakistan. Despite being situated in two different regions, the selected countries have been affected by the threat of violent extremism, mainly associated with their state fragility. The paper argues that to counter and prevent the threat of extremism, it is necessary to understand its linkages with 'state fragility'. It further discusses that the linkage can enable policies to counter and prevent violent extremism effectively and sustainably.

## Keywords

Countering violent extremism, Nigeria, Somalia, Pakistan, state fragility

## Introduction

Long before the United States withdrew from Afghanistan (August 2021), the world witnessed a steady and significant decline in terrorist incidents. Several scholars have cited effective counter-terrorism strategies (both kinetic and non-kinetic) that managed to curb widespread terrorism. According to Global Terrorism Index (GTI), in 2021, the death toll from terrorism was 7,142, representing a 1.1 percent decrease from 2020. In addition, a 'geographical' shift of terrorism concentration was observed; the terrorist activities shifted from South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) (IEP, 2022). GTI further revealed that the status of the most terrorism-stricken top ten countries remained essentially unchanged

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in 2021. For instance, Afghanistan and Iraq maintained their top two positions, followed by Burkina Faso, Syria, Somalia, Nigeria, and Pakistan (IEP, 2022). This data reflects that, apart from the African countries (especially Somalia and Nigeria), Pakistan continues to be threatened by the menace of violent extremism and terrorism; hence, the issues remain a major security concern for Pakistan and the region. Although Nigeria & Somalia, and Pakistan are situated on two different continents, and there seems to be little correspondence between the contextually-driven nature(s), or realities of violent extremism, the enabling environment for the extremist groups can be attributed to the similar fragile domestic conditions.

Despite having profound links with violent extremism, the concept of 'state fragility' has remained neglected in the discourse surrounding structural determinants of violent extremism. Andrew Glazzard et al. (2017) explained that state fragility provides enabling environment for the emergence of violent extremism; hence, it poses a serious threat to national security. State fragility can be measured using various indicators such as political, social and economic instability (Carment & Samy, 2012; USAID, 2017). In this vein, the paper identifies some common underlying fragile conditions that continue to nourish violent extremism in Pakistan, Nigeria, and Somalia. It establishes a linkage between internal state fragility (emanating from security, political, economic, and exogenous factors) and violent extremism.

Furthermore, the government of Pakistan is committed to developing close economic and political relationships — bilateral and multilateral ties — with several African states. Therefore, understanding and exploring common security challenges and concerns can equally prove to be a vital facet of the bilateral and multilateral cooperation between Pakistan and the African continent. Against this backdrop, this paper aims to identify common security challenges in Nigeria, Somalia, and Pakistan. It further elucidates common internal fragile conditions that provide an enabling environment for manifestation, intensification, and resurgence of violent extremism. In doing so, the paper discusses existing policies related to Countering/Preventing Violent Extremism (C/PVE) adopted by the aforementioned countries. Moreover, it illuminates the need for close state-level cooperation to identify and implement best practices within the domain of C/PVE.

### ***A Brief Note on Methodology***

To achieve the research objectives, a case study research method was adopted (Baskarada, 2014; Kohlbacher, 2006). The study employed a qualitative research method to keep in mind the relative dearth of data on the subject under discussion, especially for establishing a correlation between state fragility and violent extremism. With regards, official C/PVE policies and other related literature were used to corroborate the main argument of the study. As George and Bennet (2005) discussed, the 'tracing' process was used to analyze the case studies *within* their historical context. It helped to explain how the inherent elements of state fragility were responsible for the rise of violent extremism. On the other hand, the congruence procedure (Willgens et al., 2016) remained helpful in establishing a causal link between state fragility and violent extremism by providing measurement indicators such as level of political participation, economic status, and overall security outlook.

### **Understanding State Fragility, Violent Extremism, and C/PVE**

Understanding the multifaceted dynamics of violent extremism is a major topic of scholarly interest. From a policy perspective, several countries have dedicated

significant efforts to understanding the embedded complexities involved in the manifestation of violent extremism, hence, adopting different definitional approaches to violent extremism. For instance, the Australian Government conceives the construct of violent extremism as “[...] beliefs and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals. This includes terrorism and other forms of politically motivated and communal violence.” (Australian Government, 2016). Similarly, the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development defines violent extremism as the “[...] use of facilitation of violence targeted on civilians as a means of rectifying grievances, real or perceived, which form the basis of increasingly strong exclusive group identities” (De Silva, 2017, p. 5). Whereas, USAID (2011) defines violent extremism as “advocating, engaging in, preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence to further social, economic and political objectives”. The mentioned definitions highlight the exploitation of grievances and marginalization of groups and/or identities as major underlying factors towards increasing violent extremism globally.

Generally, in any given state and/or society, the menace of violent extremism is countered through the C/PVE policies. Such strategies offer a ‘proactive’ approach “to counter efforts by extremists to recruit, radicalize, and mobilize followers to violence” (US Department of Homeland Security, 2016). The C/PVE approaches address the ‘conditions’ and factors that most likely contribute to the recruitment and radicalization of a vulnerable population. Furthermore, they have been widely acknowledged to embrace the idea of de-radicalization and re-integration of extremists. Another critical characteristic of C/PVE is that it includes broad societal stakeholders (such as communities, religious authorities, youth, and civil society actors) (Jayakumar, 2019; Makki & Yamin, 2021).

The C/PVE concept has its roots in Europe, attracting attention in the aftermath of terrorist attacks in Madrid (2004) and London (Fierison, 2005). In response to the ‘homegrown’ terrorism, the United Kingdom initiated a ‘Prevent’ program, introducing the concept of Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) at a policy level. The country spent GBP 80 million on local programs to prevent religion-based radicalization (Frazer & Nünlist, 2015).

In the United States, the RAND Corporation report revealed that at least 17 adolescent boys and young men left the Minneapolis-St. Paul area during 2007-2008 and joined Al-Shabaab militant training camps in Somalia (Jenkins, 2010). The reported incidents brought attention to homegrown violent extremism. Consequently, the C/PVE gained momentum during the Obama administration. A task force was established to counter radical ideology *within* the United States (Weine et al., 2011). The ‘soft’ approach became an important component of the ‘Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States’ (SIP, 2011; Weine, 2013).

In the developing or underdeveloped world, several countries have equally taken commendable steps to counter the threat of violent extremism. Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognize distinct contextual factors or root causes that become responsible for propagating violent extremism. As mentioned earlier, state fragility has a significant role in making any state or society prone to violent extremism. However, the term ‘fragile state’ was first introduced to explain broader factors that influence development and economics; however, later, the term became interchangeable with theoretical expressions such as ‘failed states’ or ‘weak states’ and reflected significant correspondence with the notion of security (Ferreira, 2017).



From a conceptual lens, fragile states exhibit severe developmental challenges resulting from weak domestic conditions, including weak institutional capacities, poor governance, lack of legitimacy, and overall poor human security (Burundi Workshop Draft, 2005).

[A] fragile region or state has weak capacities to carry out basic governance functions and lacks the ability to develop mutually constructive relations with society. Fragile regions or states are also more vulnerable to internal or external shocks such as economic crises or natural disasters (OECD, 2015, p. 21).

### **Violent Extremism and P/CVE in Pakistan, Nigeria, and Somalia**

Looking back at the past 20 years since the WoT started in response to 9/11, the threats posed by Al-Qaeda and later by ISIS/Daesh have been addressed primarily through kinetic means. However, violent extremism is still a potent threat in several regional and local contexts, such as Pakistan and the African continent. The efforts to counter violent extremism could not ensure sustainable peace primarily because of the 'reactive' and short-term approach. This paper points toward the state fragility that led to hosting those ill conditions conducive to the propagation of violent extremism. The following sub-sections provide insights into the landscapes of Nigeria, Somalia, and Pakistan, focusing primarily on the internal weaknesses of the state polity-adopted C/PVE strategies.

#### ***Nigeria***

Nigeria has been facing the threat of violent extremism and terrorism for many years, and the key group active in the country is Boko Haram. Since 2009, it has undertaken a brutal insurgency in North-Eastern Nigeria and neighboring countries of Chad and Cameroon. The insurgency has caused a security and humanitarian crisis. It has resulted in the displacement of approximately two million people. There has also been massive economic devastation in an already poor and underdeveloped region of northern Nigeria (Felbab-Brown, 2018; Adeyeye et al., 2022). In 2021, Boko Haram remained largely weakened primarily due to the killing of its leader (Abubakar Shekau) and the upsurge in terrorist attacks by a rival group called the Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA) (e.g., Upkong, 2022). The ISWA also has a presence in the country, further complicating Nigeria's militant landscape.

Boko Haram has reportedly started regrouping in Nigeria's North-Central state of Niger, emerging as a serious security threat. The general perception is that the death of rival ISWA leader, Abu Musab al-Barnawi in October 2021, has allowed Boko Haram to a resurgence. Consequently, the United States is assisting the Nigerian security forces to counter any such potential rise of terrorist organizations through kinetic measures (Seldin, 2021). Nevertheless, before making any assumptions, it is important to understand the root causes of violent extremism in Nigeria which 're-enabled' Boko Haram and provided a conducive environment to ISWA. Most importantly, it has been observed that Boko Haram is regrouping in neighboring countries and transnational sanctuaries are the lifeline of any insurgent group (Kindzeka, 2021; Makki & Iftikhar, 2021).

There is a consensus among scholars that Boko Haram (re)emerged in North Nigeria due to the fragile socio-political, economic, and security conditions marked by highly polarized/fractured ethno-religiosity (e.g., Tonwe & Eke, 2013). Hence, the organization effectively exploited the state's fragility in its favor. For instance, the inter-identity-based conflict between Christians and Muslims, general economic



grievances, political instability, and bad governance have all remained core causes of state fragility. Concerningly, the authorities have been unable to address the issue of fragility as a structural determinant of violent extremism (e.g., Omotosho, 2014; Iyekekpolo, 2018). In particular, the economic grievances and deprivation in Northern Nigeria accelerated the rise of Boko Haram. For instance, poverty, lack of employment, and economic inequalities in the Muslim-dominated regions provided extremists to lure the vulnerable segment of society (Mamah, 2008).

Agriculture was the mainstay of the Northern economy before the oil boom of the 1970s. The oil boom severely affected the traditional agricultural economy, causing negative impacts on the local livelihood portfolio. Thus, the region became one of the most impoverished areas in Nigeria, facing extreme inequalities with bottomed human development indicators. The extremist organizations then capitalized on such fragile conditions for recruitment and securing local support — maintaining the ‘disorder’ (David et al., 2015; Anugwom, 2018; Suleiman & Karim, 2015). Similarly, the Lake Chad Basin was once well-known for exporting food products, including millet, sorghum, and livestock herding and fishing. However, climate variability and excessive population growth have altered the socio-economic profile of the region (Owonikoko & Momodu, 2020).

According to the Congressional Research Service, ISWA is currently active in the Lake Chad Basin and is responsible for persistent violence and security threats in Nigeria. It has established several administrative units and is considered more active than Boko Haram in taking advantage of local conditions. In addition, it has exploited the governance vacuum in Lake Chad Basin and accumulated unprecedented support for itself. ISWA has also been engaged in providing so-called humanitarian assistance to the local population, making it difficult for the government to reclaim the ‘state-citizen’ relationship through exclusive reliance on ‘hard’ measures.

During the United Nations Security Council meeting, the Executive Secretary of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and Head of the Multinational Joint Task Force (Ambassador Maman Nuhu) revealed that the youth comprised 60 percent of the total population of the Lake Chad Basin. Therefore, it is important to understand that the significant youth representation in the overall population mix is at ‘risk’. Owing to the lack of economic opportunities and employment, a substantial portion of the local population is already involved in an illicit and illegal economy (e.g., smuggling, drug trafficking, arms and human trafficking). Such informality and economic disorder established a political economy favouring terrorist organizations (United Nations Security Council Meeting, 2021).

#### *Government Responses against Violent Extremism in Nigeria*

‘National Counter-Terrorism Strategy’ and the ‘National Security Strategy of Nigeria’ are the primary policy documents that outline the roles of various stakeholders in C/PVE activities (Nwangwu & Ezeibe, 2019). The ‘National Security Strategy’ of Nigeria addresses external and internal security challenges the country faces. On the other hand, ‘National Counter-Terrorism Strategy’ focuses on the threats related to terrorism and violent extremism in the country, which are kinetic in nature. Nigeria’s government, with the collaboration of the international community, has started funding various efforts to address the sources of extremism and instability in the country. For instance, in partnership with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), a ‘Demobilisation, Disassociation, Reintegration, and Reconciliation’ (DDRR) Action Plan was developed for the country (Nan, 2021).

The Nigerian government undertook several other initiatives to deal with violent extremism and terrorism (e.g., Onapajo & Ozden, 2020). However, there is still a need for better engagement of local communities in C/PVE-related initiatives. The Nigerian state's response to counter the threat of extremism has remained highly ineffective because it has mainly relied on military-centric or kinetic approaches. Consequently, the authorities have been unable to address the underlying reasons associated with state's fragility.

### ***Somalia***

Somalia is the most severely drought-affected country in the Horn of Africa, directly affecting 4.3 million people and causing the displacement of 271,000 people (United Nations Security Council Meeting, 2022). The country has long faced the challenge of violent extremism and terrorism. An internationally designated terrorist group, Al-Shabab, is in direct conflict with the security forces of Somalia and the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM). Al-Shabab is considered to have links with Al-Qaeda (Masters & Sergie, 2015). However, the group is allegedly involved in acts of violence in neighboring Kenya, becoming a threat to regional security. Since 2020, the group has been undergoing a renewed resurgence phase, increasing its violent activities across Somalia. Alfano and Goerlach (2022) believe that the resurgence is primarily because of the relocation of the United States troops from Somalia to Kenya and Djibouti. The Head of United States African Command (AFRICOM), which oversees responsibility for Somalia, reported to Congress that 'we may be backsliding' and that the departure of United States troops from Somalia (and Afghanistan) has limited Washington's ability to contain terrorist groups linked to Al-Qaeda and the ISIS (The Soufan Center, 2022).

Al-Shabab has effectively exploited the bad governance across Somalia, gaining significant territorial control. Widespread unemployment, poverty, corruption, injustice, the ineffective rule of law and poor governance have collectively added to the rise in violent extremism in Somalia (Ali, 2020). Al-Shabab manipulated the state's fragility to justify its ideology. According to a report, Al-Shabab spent USD 25 million on weapon purchases, and its annual revenue mainly comes from the crime-terror nexus, which stands at USD 180 million ("Al-Shabab spent \$24m on weapons last year", 2022). Due to Somalia's poor law and order, the group controls over 100 check posts to collect money and administer several areas.

The continued political instability in Somalia has equally affected the state's ability to counter Al-Shabab. This political uncertainty has emboldened Al-Shabab to keep operating and expanding its influence. James Swan, the United Nations Special Representative on Somalia, states, "Political divisions and election delays have allowed insurgent forces to make some recent gains" (Muse, 2022, n.d.). The political mismanagement and detrimental security situation have created an acute humanitarian crisis in Somalia.

### ***Government Response to Counter Violent Extremism in Somalia***

Following the global pattern in countering violent extremism, Somalia has also directed its maximum resources to counter the threat of extremism and terrorism (Botha, 2021). The United States has also provided significant assistance to the country. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and Somalia's security forces have launched several successful operations against Al-Shabab. Due to the operations, Al-Shabab has been confined to the peripheries. The Federal Government of Somalia, with the help of its international donors, is advancing its efforts toward

C/PVE. Institute for Security Studies shows that at least 27 organizations are working on projects related to C/PVE in Somalia (Van Zyl, 2019). These projects target youth, various religious groups, women, ex-members of Al-Shabab, government agencies, and civil society organizations, and assist them in capacity building to counter the threat of violent extremism (Safer World, n.d.).

In 2016, Somalia developed its own 'National Action Plan' to counter violent extremism through a culture of dialogue and engagement (Safer World, n.d.). The government also introduced Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) programs to de-radicalize the ex-militants. The Serendi Project in Mogadishu has remained significant in this regard which aims to support the reintegration of low-risk combatants. The project is funded by both local and international organizations (Ali, 2020). Though with the help of the international community (United States, United Kingdom, European Union, and United Nations), Somalia has developed result-oriented C/PVE policies, the C/PVE initiatives typically ignore local grievances and ethno-tribal dynamics (Hansen et al., 2019).

### ***Pakistan***

Violent extremism has proved itself to be one of the most significant challenges to Pakistan's national security. Moreover, the menace became highly intensified during the post-9/11 era. Similar to Nigeria and Somalia (as discussed above), there have been several terrorist organizations active in Pakistan. In addition, sectarian and ethnonationalism-based organized violence remains a challenge for national internal security. Nevertheless, in the contemporary context, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) emerged as the most concerning a terrorist organization, which spearheaded several terrorist attacks across Pakistan. TTP primarily stationed itself in the border region of Pakistan and Afghanistan (i.e., erstwhile FATA). Owing to intense military operations, TTP's operational ability has been significantly reduced; nevertheless, in the recent month, it started to re-emerge after the United States withdrawal from Afghanistan. Having ideological inclination and logistical ties with the Afghan Taliban, there is a widespread belief that the TTP is active due to the support from cross-border. Indeed, the argument has been well established, particularly concerning the transnational nature of 'new' terrorism. However, one cannot ignore the fragile local contexts (i.e., structural determinants) of erstwhile Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA), which provided fertile grounds for the TTP to remerge and regroup in the aftermath of a successful military operation (Ahmed et al., 2021).

Before May 2018, erstwhile FATA had semi-autonomous status. The region was governed by the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR): a legal, judicial, administrative, and governance framework introduced by the British in 1901 for the tribal areas of Pakistan. Under FCR, all political and administrative powers were accumulated in the hands of tribal Maliks and political agents. The government of Pakistan had very little writ in the region. Furthermore, erstwhile FATA lacked any 'formal' governance-related institutions to serve the local population and develop a state-citizen relationship. Consequently, the entire erstwhile FATA became highly underdeveloped, marginalized (extreme socio-economic and spatial inequalities), and ill-governed, exhibiting poor socio-economic indicators. Similar to the above-discussed cases of Somalia and Nigeria, the institutional and governance vacuum was filled by the non-state actors who managed to anchor their narrative in the local contexts (Yousaf, 2019).

Later, the government of Pakistan decided to mainstream the erstwhile FATA through its merger with the adjacent Khyber Pukhtunkhwa province. The merger was

formalized in May 2018 with a constitutional amendment. So far, significant progress has been made regarding the FATA mainstreaming, including security sector reconstruction, right to vote, institutional development, formalized border management, diversification of the economy, and governance and institutional reforms. There has been a national consensus that the merger will contribute to sustainable peace and development. More importantly, the socio-economic development will address conditions that led the region to be labelled as violent geography (Dastageer, 2019; Khan, 2011).

#### *Government Efforts to Counter Violent Extremism in Pakistan*

Initially, the Pakistan army and Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) primarily relied on kinetic or hard measures. For instance, since 2001, the Pakistan army has conducted several military operations to eliminate the threat of violent extremism and terrorism. Most of the operations were conducted in the erstwhile FATA. The effectiveness of the kinetic measures can be gauged from the significant decline in terrorist incidents across the country. More importantly, the military-centric approach not only effectively regained the state writ over erstwhile FATA territory but also significantly affected the operational ability of the terrorist organizations.

Although the kinetic/counter-terrorism approach proved to be highly effective, it lacked the aspects of C/PVE, developing a preventive strategy to counter violent extremism embedded in the fabric of society. This necessitated a holistic approach to address the root causes of terrorism and violent extremism. In response, 20 points National Action Plan (NAP) was developed, reflecting a significant shift from hard to soft measures (e.g., Yaseen & Naveed, 2018). NAP brought attention to several structural issues which were earlier not part of the policy toolkit: for instance, developing counter-narrative to violent extremism, social media and changing dynamics of violent extremism, the establishment of special military courts, actions against sectarian-based violent extremism, Madrasa reforms, and mainstreaming of erstwhile FATA, de-radicalization and reintegration of militants (Shahab & Ullah, 2021; Khan et al., 2021; Orakzai, 2019; Zahid, 2017). NAP was followed by two more important policy documents that supplemented the need to counter the menace of violent extremism through soft measures: National Internal Security Policy (NISP 2018-2023) and National Counter Extremism Policy Guidelines (NCEPG, 2018) (e.g., Makki & Akash, 2020; Khalid & Kamal, 2020). Pakistan also introduced several legislations to respond to violent extremism and terrorism in an institutionalized manner. Moreover, National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) was developed as an institution dedicated to formalizing a plan of action to counter the threat of violent extremism and terrorism in Pakistan. It is important to note that the authority published the mentioned internal security policies and C/PVE guidelines.

#### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The above-discussed cases of Nigeria, Somalia, and Pakistan reveal that violent extremism and state fragility are highly entangled. Despite effective measures that significantly improved the security situation in the cases under consideration, the paper argued that sole focus on kinetic measures could not ensure sustainable peace and stability. Hence, the threat of violent extremism remains a challenge for Pakistan, Somalia and Nigeria, where the resurgence of extremist organizations can be well observed.

Therefore, it is essential to consider the causes of state fragility as important foci of C/PVE policies. The elements and dynamics of state fragility may differ on

state and regional levels; however, its entanglement with violent extremism across distant geographies cannot be ignored. For instance, in the contexts of Nigeria, Somalia, and Pakistan, state fragility was observed to be the main driver or factor behind the resurgence, intensification, or legitimization of violent extremism. In this regard, the policy should focus on strengthening the state-citizen relationship (i.e., social contract). Public service delivery (health and education sectors), better economic and employment opportunities, the rule of law, protection of human rights, and equal political participation are some key areas that need to be the focus of C/PVE approaches. Such re-orientation necessarily requires community-driven approaches, ensuring inclusivity.

Given the higher percentage of youth in Pakistan, Nigeria and Somalia, it is equally important to devise C/PVE strategies that effectively engage youth. Youth participation in socio-economic and constructive political engagement(s) will not only serve a sustainable national development agenda but will also address their vulnerability to violent extremism. For instance, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) emphasizes youth education, opportunities to raise concerns, and technical and vocational training (e.g., Citaristi, 2022). Such an approach can be implemented in Pakistan, Nigeria and Somalia, where the unemployed and marginalized youth are at risk vis-à-vis violent extremism. Similarly, the C/PVE agenda must acknowledge the role of women in peace and security. It is interesting to observe that in Somalia, several women-based organizations are actively involved in C/PVE-related initiatives (Schamber, 2021). On the other hand, the role of women has not been given due attention in the existing C/PVE policy frameworks in Pakistan. Nevertheless, civil-society actors remain relatively active at the grass-root level, facilitating the effective implementation of C/PVE policies at community levels (Qadeem, 2018).

Furthermore, the education sector can play an integral role in the C/PVE agenda, as argued by several scholars. Indeed arguable, but the role of madrasas has been widely framed as promoting religiously-driven extremist ideologies in the case studies under discussion. Consequently, particularly in Pakistan, there have been deliberate efforts to mainstream and regularize the religious education system (Ahmed, 2020). However, we must acknowledge the ‘welfare’ role that madrassas have been offering to the poverty-stricken and marginalized communities, where the states have failed to provide basic necessities (such as health, education, food, and shelter). We must also not ignore the increasing symptoms of on-campus radicalization in modern education institutions (Brown & Saeed, 2015; Jibrin, 2020; Iqbal & Mehmood, 2021).

The threat of violent extremism necessitates a comprehensive C/PVE policy framework that considers socio-political, economic, security, and legal aspects. Such an approach refers to recognizing the nexus between state fragility and the threat of violent extremism. The presented cases in this article (Nigeria, Somalia and Pakistan) highlight that state fragility is one of the main underlying factors behind the (re) emergence of violent extremism and terrorism.

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# Building Resilience through Peace Education: Perspectives of Teacher Educators about Pre-Service Teacher Education

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## Abstract

The key objective of this research was to establish an evidence-based study about current teaching practices, focusing on the critical elements of teaching methods used in pre-service education programs that can build resilience against (violent) extremism. One of the principles underpinning training young teachers is to help prepare and equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to practice peace education. The qualitative data was collected from teachers engaged in the education programs. In total, 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Wah Cantonment, and six major cities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province, Pakistan. The study argues that to ensure resilient teachers and trainers, the Bachelors of Education degree (B.Ed) program needs to offer specialist skills and a theoretical understanding of peace, civic, and tolerance education. Such a result-orientated focus can enhance the effectiveness of the existing education programs in Pakistan vis-à-vis resilience towards (violent) extremism.

## Keywords

Resilience, violent extremism, peace education, tolerance, teacher education, Pakistan

## Introduction

Resilience can be defined as the ability to recover from adversity. Another important to note is that resilience is a process, rather characteristic or a feature, which enables an individual or a society to recover through positive adoption from any adversity or event (e.g., Wosnitza et al., 2018). According to American Psychological Association (APA), “resilience is the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands” (n.d.).

Resilience, as a concept, has a multidisciplinary presence and application. Notably, it has been widely applied in the academic fields (of social) psychology, sociology, risk and disaster management, and security studies. However, there is a

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greater need to explicate the potential role of resilience in education studies (as a discipline). In particular, allowing the scope of resilience to be cross-fertilized with civic education is indeed promising. Civic education studies the rights and responsibilities related to the exercise of citizenship. It enables citizens to be aware of their roles in society and helps them be involved in the societal and political decision-making system.

Furthermore, civic education provides a multidisciplinary approach by facilitating the learners to recognize the democratic attitude and promote diversity. Inarguably, recognizing diversity is an essential step toward sustainable peace, thus, serving as a building block of resilience (Fedorenko & Sharanova, 2019; Kerr, 1999). For instance, Peace Direct, an international organization working for sustainable peace across the globe, contends that “peace education activities promote the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will help people either to prevent the occurrence of conflict, resolve conflicts peacefully, or create social conditions conducive to peace” (n.d.). Therefore, peace education plays an important role in building resilience in children and young adults against the effects of trauma and violent extremism (Kimhi et al., 2017). The main focus of this study is to assess pre-service teachers’ training in Pakistan vis-à-vis civic, peace, and tolerance education (i.e., peace education). The teacher’s training develops essential abilities and approaches for dealing with issues concerning peace education both inside and outside the schools. In doing so, the study explores the concept, methods, and curriculum of peace education. The main arguments of the study are based on the opinion and feedback received from the teacher educators about the inculcation of elements of civic, peace, and tolerance (as peace education) in the curriculum and pedagogy of the B.Ed elementary education program in Pakistan. The paper further determines the potential integration of said components for building resilience through pre-service teacher education. While elucidating the policies, programs, and interventions, the article explicates how teachers in Pakistan can play a role in peacebuilding through perception building and social unity (e.g., Masood-ul-Hassan et al., 2014).

### **Conceptual Understanding of Peace Education**

Recently, peace education has received significant attention, primarily driven by the emergence of contemporary educational dilemmas, reflecting the importance of peace education and the teachers’ challenges. In particular, teachers are a vital component of any education system, and quality teaching is a prerequisite for the success of any educational program or activity. A broader perspective on the promotion of sustainable peace and tolerance often focuses on the teachers’ role in fostering social skills, responsible citizenship, and skills for sustainable livelihoods, challenging gender inequalities and overcoming individual and societal difficulties (Novelli & Sayed, 2016; Leach & Humphreys, 2007). In this vein, peace education in classrooms aims at equipping students with the necessary knowledge and attitudes to promote respect, tolerance, participation, and cooperation. Several scholars have argued that aspects related to peace education need to be added to the instructional curricula of all educational institutions as early as preschool to promote a peace culture (e.g., Schulz et al., 2018).

In addition, peace education can foster respect for human rights; improve democratic values, social justice, and solidarity among people and nations. It further promotes conflict resolution through dialogue and develops empathy for individuals and nations. Indeed, teachers play a crucial role in achieving these values. Consequently, teachers should be equipped with universal morals, such as freedom,

justice, human rights, gender equality, tolerance, and respect for the right to live. They should also develop an understanding of peace and a desire for an internalized peaceful culture (Wulandari & Murdiono, 2018; Snauwaert, 2020).

History also plays a vital role in peace education for developing or discouraging a culture and environment of peace. History education is increasingly recognized as a powerful tool that can alter the dynamics of identity-based conflicts and promote mutual understanding and reconciliation between conflicting parties (Korostelina, 2013). In this regard, teachers can play an important role by challenging existing prejudices, stereotypes, and justifications for conflicts by providing alternative interpretations, multiple perspectives, and narratives of positive intergroup relations and cooperation. Peace education on history (as a theme) targets rudimentary opinions by reducing biases toward the out-groups, developing shared perceptions and identifying the commonalities among diverse groups (Ndabaga, 2020; Breidlid, 2019). Therefore, teachers can create a culture of peace through changes in perceptions about in-group and out-group identity and by creating awareness about the sensitivities of history.

However, teacher stress has increased in recent years internationally (Day & Gu, 2013; Katz et al., 2018), leading to burnout and attrition, particularly for early career teachers and teachers working in urban and/or rural (disadvantaged) schools. The economic, academic, and psychological costs of teacher burnout and attrition are significant as it is directly linked to lower student achievement and negative school climates (Brunetti, 2006; Ellison & Mays-Woods, 2019). The resilience in teachers can be nurtured by the intellectual, social, and organizational environments in which teachers work and live, rather than being simply a personal attribute or trait determined by nature.

Resilient teachers are those who do not compromise their professional duties and keep giving their best despite of many challenges they are facing in their lives (Day & Gu, 2009; Flores, 2020). On the other hand, several scholars argue that resilience in teachers is not only the capability to bounce back in extremely adversarial circumstances, but it is the ability of the teachers for everyday resilience which enables them to sustain their commitment and effectiveness in responding positively to the unavoidable uncertainties characterized by their professional lives (Day & Gu, 2013; Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2014; Bikar et al., 2021). Therefore, resilient teachers can adapt to multiple circumstances and improve their skills in conflicting situations (Ju & Fan, 2021) and thus can quickly and skillfully reduce puzzling situations or repetitive obstacles. Not only do resilient teachers persevere, but they also maintain job satisfaction and obligation to the profession they have earned. Because resilience is a multidimensional process achieved through a blend of individual and ecological features, thus, environmental conditions can affect life in different ways (Wright et al., 2019). To impart effective peace education, teacher educators must teach appropriate and healthy ways to cope with learning pressures and endurance. The challenges faced by teachers today are becoming increasingly complex. Moreover, in underdeveloped societies, teachers are underpaid and undervalued, so they need to be provided with a comfortable working environment and techniques to cope with existing challenges (Klusmann et al., 2016; Setiadi et al., 2017; Hasan & Baskey, 2019).

Research by teachers in practice has revealed that what they consider as 'discussions' in their classrooms is giving answers to the questions asked by the students. Such discussions lack any aspects of critical thinking. An actual discussion is not only based on knowledge but also covers diverse topics that can change the

orientation of any pre-existing reality. In any democratic setting, the input of public opinion is paramount to the decision-making process. Therefore, any political topic discussed in classrooms shall also be within the ambit of nation-building and, more importantly, result-oriented (Parker, 2003; Gu, 2017). Such activities and classroom-based engagements shape opinions and encourage young people to promote such practices within their communities. Hence, educators widely propagate that students should be actively involved in problem-solving activities and strategies concerned with tolerance and civic values (Ersay, 2014; Damico, 2020).

It is equally important to discuss factors contributing to teachers' resilience and their significance in preventing a culture of conflict and violence within the schools and society. Helping pre-service teachers to explore strategies to respond to challenges in the supportive learning environment of pre-service learning is important to building strength and resilience for teachers' careers (Mampane, 2014; Balaei et al., 2019):

- *Soft skills*: providing better education, language training, and interventions designed to encourage soft skills. Innovation and entrepreneurship provide better economic opportunities and enhanced performance at work. Soft skills refer to the skills, competencies, and characteristics pertaining to personality, attitude, and behavior instead of formal or technical knowledge. The skills cover proficiencies (such as communication, problem-solving, time management, teamwork, and leadership) and are considered essential, especially for teachers, as they stand at the very heart of the teaching and learning process (Dogan, 2021).
- *Civic education*: pre-service educational programs that encourage debate & dialogue and promote different learning perspectives (such as cultures and beliefs). Civic education equips teachers and students with the necessary practical application tools and thinking skills to facilitate their own learning. It identifies and accomplishes personal goals and contributes to the overall society. Furthermore, civic education provides a clear path to student empowerment and promotes democratic accountability and good governance.
- *Sociocultural factors*: providing teachers with an environment that promotes participation in a wide variety of institutional relationships, including shared learning relationships with peers. It promotes mutuality, empowerment, and (Jordan, 2006). Similarly, there is growing recognition that pre-service teacher education programs should integrate technology into their curricula to ensure teachers are adequately prepared for the use of technology in teaching practices; hence, transforming social practices.

Although resilience may seem intrinsic, it can be established and enriched through direct action. These actions can take the form of proactive support from educational organizations around the practice of teaching and learning. Ideally, a resilient education system continues to provide safe, equitable access to quality education services that help reinforce or grow learners' literacy and social skills in times of conflict or crisis. When education is risk-informed, conflict-sensitive, and equitable, it strengthens resilience at the following multiple levels:

- Education can support and strengthen social capital, an important safety net for individuals and households. Completing a primary or secondary education raises the human capital of individuals, a critical foundation for resilient people, households, and communities. Through education, people are better able to adapt



or transform their behaviors and livelihoods owing to increased access to socio-economic capital (such as employment opportunities, access to information and system, exposure to democratic values and understanding of human rights) (World Bank, 2018).

- Education strengthens trust, tolerance, and empathy between and among various communities, improving levels of civic engagement and increasing civic skills for citizens to support inclusive institutions (Reyes, 2013; World Bank, 2018; Shah & Lopes Cardozo, 2019).
- Education offers opportunities within and outside the classroom for intra- and inter-group dialogue and cooperation. Such opportunities are essential to develop mechanisms for strengthening community relationships and trust (Shah et al., 2018).
- Higher education levels for mothers strongly influence the likelihood of children being fully vaccinated and reduce child mortality and growth stunting (Fernald et al., 2012; Forshaw et al., 2017; Sabates et al., 2010; Berke et al., 2021). Furthermore, education can improve women's empowerment and gender equality, which are strong predictors of whether households can escape and remain out of poverty in the face of shocks and stressors (Sen & Mukherjee, 2014).
- Disaster risk education is critical in strengthening community knowledge about responding to natural disasters, climate change, health emergencies, and future armed conflict (Amri et al., 2017). With regards, education can strengthen the social, emotional and soft skills, enhancing the abilities of individuals to recover from such shocks (Ibrahim et al., 2017).

### **Methodology**

This research is phenomenological in nature as it is concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the individuals and emphasizes the importance of personal experiences and interpretation. Phenomenological research also allows flexible methods of data collection. For instance, Seamon (2000) suggests that "the best phenomenological methods are those that allow the human experience to arise in a rich, unstructured, multidimensional way" (p. 163). For this research, primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The study sample comprised 15 teacher educators (see Table 1). A Random sampling technique was used in the selection of the sample.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teacher educators in different universities. The interview guide was limited to 16 questions related to (i) peace education (ii) and building future teachers' resilience. Open-ended questions were developed so respondents could elaborate on details, express their thoughts, and offer personal opinions based on experience. The research team personally visited all the selected institutes for data collection.

**Table 1:** Sample size of the study

<i>No</i>	<i>Institutes</i>	<i>No. of Teacher Educators</i>
1	Kohat University of Science and Technology Kohat	02
2	Malakand University, Malakand	01
3	University of Sawat, Sawat	02
4	University of Haripur, Haripur	02
5	University of Hazara, Mansehra	02
6	University of Peshawar, Peshawar	01
7	International Islamic University, Islamabad	03
8	Sir Syed College of Education & Professional Training, Wah Cantt.	01
9	Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi.	01
<i>Total</i>		<i>15</i>

Bearing in mind the ethical considerations of the research, no potential conflict of interest was identified or reported by the researchers. The fieldwork was conducted after the ethical approval from the university administration. Participants were assured that any information that could reveal the identity of the respondents would not be shared with anyone. All the research participants were provided with the necessary details about the project; however, only those respondents who agreed to participate were engaged. The data were analyzed through thematic analysis to understand, describe and interpret the experiences and perceptions of teacher educators in particular circumstances (Lochmiller, 2021). After reading through the data-set(s) relevant patterns were identified, which further helped to derive different themes resonating with the research objectives, as discussed below.

## Results

Based on the collected data, informing the main research questions and objectives concerning perspectives of teacher educators regarding the contribution of peace education to resilience in Pakistan, the following sections present the main empirically-driven themes.

### *Developing a 'Peace' Environment*

Most respondents believed that peace education promotes knowledge, skills, and attitudes that help people avoid conflicts and create a (social) environment that is fundamentally conducive to peace. In particular, education provides an opportunity to unite different groups and identities in a community-level dialogue. Such an environment typically includes civil society groups, schools, local community members and elders, and the media. Respondents also stated that education plays a central role in helping people to develop more peaceful, tolerant, and inclusive societies. Similarly, peace education provides people with the understanding, skills, and values they need to cooperate in resolving the interconnected challenges of contemporary times and helps to become more resilient, both at the self and societal level.

### ***Diverse Roles of Teachers Beyond Subject-specific knowledge***

The teacher educators agreed that educational institutions' role is not limited to improving social and economic values but also teaching the lesson of harmony, tolerance, equality, and justice. In this regard, the roles of family, religious institutes, the media, and civil society are crucial for creating a peaceful society. However, schools assume separate and exclusive responsibilities for the development of responsible citizens. According to several respondents, the training mentioned above in schools should commence in the early years and continue throughout the learning process. Nevertheless, few respondents suggested combining peace education in practice by teaching people to think critically. According to the respondents, such an approach equips the learners with the means to resolve conflicts rationally with an actionable plan or strategy for peace.

### ***Peace Education as a Separate Subject***

Most respondents believed peace education should be introduced as a separate subject in the prospective teacher education curriculum throughout Pakistan. This subject can also help create awareness at the self and community levels. However, the exposure can be further extended to several important environmental and cultural factors in building a peaceful and just society. Similarly, several respondents suggested that peace education must be incorporated at all levels and courses of study at the B.Ed level program. Furthermore, the objective of providing peace education training to prepare pre-service students also needs to be added to pre-service education programs.

### ***Understanding Resilience and Wellbeing through Education***

Peace education plays a significant role in building resilience in individuals (and specifically children) against the effects of trauma and violence. It enables individuals and society to resist violence and recover from the crisis. With regards, the peacebuilding approach in education is based on providing the students with the needed skills and knowledge to achieve change on both the individual and societal levels which would further allow them to face and overcome the constantly escalating internal and external threats. Hence, resilience manifests through an identified cycle of change (Juncos & Josphe, 2020).

Respondents further shared that through the professional education system, the teachers can interact with the students closely and to know them better. The teacher-student interaction additionally allows an opportunity to develop effective teacher-student-parent communication. Such an arrangement or teachers' orientation not only offers an opportunity or safe environment to the students for self-reflection(s) but also enables them to identify any undesirable pattern(s) amongst the students which need attention for preventive-based interventions.

### ***Education for Intercultural Understanding***

Peace education and related content and/or activities ensure inclusivity. It promotes a sense of respect, empathy, and understanding among students (Ben-Porath, 2005). In this vein, several respondents agreed that in countries such as Pakistan (i.e., ethnoreligious and highly polarized), peace education has a pivotal role. More importantly, peace education is necessary to develop and prepare the future generation of Pakistan that will continue to encounter ethnoreligious and sectarian-based in-group vs out-group conflicts (at the broader societal level). It will provide

them with an alternate view of society, i.e. based on peace, human rights, and democratic values.

### ***Challenges: Peace Education in Pre-service Teacher Education***

Respondents also identified several challenges that inhibit the implementation of peace education in prospective teacher education in Pakistan. According to the respondents, there is a noticeable reluctance at the institutional administrative level to adopt unconventional approaches to teaching peace education. Furthermore, the respondents also highlighted the lack of experts in the field of peace education who can develop a result-oriented strategy and curriculum. Owing to the mentioned lack of expertise, developing and introducing peace education as an independent discipline for educators has become very challenging. The respondents believed that, indeed, there are some areas where the curriculum focuses on some of the aspects pertaining to peace and tolerance; however, overall, there is a narrow focus on the subject for the pre-service teachers' curriculum. Another critical challenge identified by the respondents was the reluctance of the teachers to engage with sensitive issues within the classroom environment. For instance, it was stated that religion is a sensitive topic, and establishing tolerance and peace within the religion requires ample religious understanding (epistemologically) and necessary skills. It was mentioned that the current peace education is based on western experience; hence, highly decontextualized. Consequently, there is a greater need to produce indigenous peace education content that resonates with the contextual realities and dynamics.

### **Concluding Remarks**

This paper elucidated the idea of resilience-building through peace education from the perspectives of teacher educators about pre-service teacher education. It has been argued that peace education aims to provide the skills required to acknowledge inclusivity and become a functioning and responsible citizen. In addition, it creates a sense of citizenship and promotes human rights and democratic values. In an educational set-up, active learning strategies, debates, discussions, and co-curricular activities are a way forward to peace education.

The research aimed to look specifically at teaching methods from teacher educators' perspectives, and it analyzed the existing modules and methods that can contribute to building resilience through peace education. With this in mind, several factors have been identified that assist in building resilience in prospective teachers. The study identified several contents related to peace education being taught B.Ed degree program level (such as acknowledgment and rejection of violence, conflict resolution via conversation, critical awareness of injustice and social justice, and imaginative understanding of peace). The primary purpose of these subjects is to help students acquire skills for non-violent conflict resolution and practice them to develop a peaceful and resilient society. Nevertheless, there is a greater need to establish a separate independent and contextualized course on peace education at the degree program level.

Furthermore, teacher educators must adopt a holistic approach to understand the root causes of violence and injustice in society. To this end, integration, implementation, and practice of peace education must be appropriately and continuously evaluated to ensure effectiveness. Attention should also be paid to teachers' training to improve their necessary skills, methods, and knowledge for result-oriented peace education. Lastly, there is a greater need to revise the existing

curriculum of prospective teacher education to integrate concepts related to peace education and devise a context-specific curriculum.

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# COVID-19, Multilateralism and Human Security: Situating the Nature and Scope of 'Global Health Diplomacy' (GHD)

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## Abstract

COVID-19 has yielded serious consequences globally, including severe damages to the economic, social, and health sectors around the world. The ensuing global crisis has made states realize that Non-Traditional Security (NTS) threats such as pandemics and diseases do not discriminate between territorial boundaries. Hence, they cannot be dealt with in isolation but by creating a mutual ground and impetus for coordination and collaboration within the international system. This research paper outlines the revival of global health diplomacy (GHD) as grounds for reforming multilateral global governance institutions under the umbrella of 'human security'. In doing so, it lists vital GHD initiatives during COVID-19 by state and non-state actors while highlighting the need for continued collaboration in the post-pandemic recovery phase. Additionally, the present study takes the case of Pakistan, a developing state with extremely fragile health and economic infrastructure, to showcase the importance of humanitarian and developmental assistance in ensuing 'human security.'

## Keywords

Multilateralism, human security, global health diplomacy, COVID-19

## Introduction

For centuries, the world has witnessed outbreaks of respiratory diseases, deadly viruses and fevers that have claimed millions of lives. The latest iteration of such deadly outbreaks, i.e., the COVID-19 virus, has shocked the modern world with its high morbidity rate and decimating impact on global systems. The ensuing crisis

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impacted healthcare systems in both developed and developing countries and generated serious disruption in critical global economic supply chains, with carry-on effects for social setups across states. Consequently, states and key global institutions felt it necessary to redirect their efforts towards global health diplomacy (GHD) to ensure economic and social stability in countries struggling to contain the impact of the pandemic. There followed attempts to revamp diplomatic engagements by prioritizing health, under the ambit of ‘human security,’ as a site for regional and international collaboration. There are multiple perspectives on the nature of GHD, with a definition by the Swiss-Maltese non-governmental organization (NGO) Diplo concisely characterizing the concept as “a field of diplomacy that brings together the priorities of global health and foreign affairs ... (and) a variety of participants in areas that affect public health all around the globe” (Diplo, n.d., para.1).

Following the COVID-19 onslaught, governments and multilateral organizations concentrated on reasserting ‘health’ as a global foreign policy priority. The idea of a health-foreign policy nexus echoes such initiatives as the 2007 Oslo Declaration, where the foreign ministers of seven countries promoted the concept of GHD to promote new forms of global health governance as an extension of foreign policy design. In addition to state-led efforts towards promoting GHD, international organizations like the United Nations (UN) and agencies such as the World Health Organization (WHO) have attempted to reassert the idea of the ‘human’ as the key referent of ‘security’ initiatives in governance circles predominated by traditional security threats.

Given the emergence of new virus strains, partly caused by asymmetric vaccination rates across the developed and developing world, WHO has emerged as a key site for disseminating real-time information on rates of spread while addressing the risk of misinformation. Access to such information is particularly important for states that lack indigenous diagnostic and research expertise in epidemiology and related fields and hi-tech equipment such as that available to the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). More than 120 nations worldwide have received testing supplies and equipment from the WHO (Jenkins & Jones, 2022). The body has also helped governments improve their hospitals and emergency care services to deal with the unique characteristics of the COVID-19 outbreak. Further, the UN, with the help of its vast global outreach, has been actively networking with local and regional organizations to support countries around the world in addressing the impact of the pandemic. In light of this, the ‘UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund’ has made creditable efforts to address the immediate health needs.

This paper argues that, given the nature and impact of COVID-19, GHD may be better contextualized using the lens of ‘human security’ as a key pillar underlying the global liberal peacekeeping paradigm and its consequent impact on contemporary multilateral engagements. The deadly impact of COVID-19 has prompted both developed and developing countries to highlight several ‘human security’ centric issues, especially the availability and affordability of adequate healthcare services.

Key states have come forward to extend their support towards developing nations in this regard, with the US, UK, Germany, and China supplying large stocks of personal protective equipment (PPE) and vaccines to states struggling to procure the same. Such bilateral and multilateral efforts have been of key help to developing states such as Pakistan in designing efficient and effective policies to deal with the pandemic. The reference point for the analysis presented in this study are official statistical reports, news articles, and papers in the contemporary academic literature that utilize GHD as a conceptual lens in problematizing state responses to COVID-19.

## GHD and Human Security

Labonte and Gagnon (2010) comment on GHD as a process by which both state and non-state actors attempt to prominently embed health concerns in the context of foreign policy decision-making, citing the importance of six essential policy frames. These may be summarized as security, development, global public goods, trade, human rights, and ethical/moral reasoning. Similarly, Chattu et al. (2019) situate GHD as embracing 'human security' in its broadest possible sense by focusing negatively on transnational 'health' threats affecting social and economic stability across multiple states.

Chattu and Knight (2019) further build on this conceptualization of 'health' as encompassing various sectors and stakeholders to project the idea of a health-peace nexus, i.e. GHD as a robust medium for ensuring 'positive peace'. As per the Institute of Economics and Peace (IEP), 'positive peace' revolves around creating an environment where human potential may flourish, i.e., where attitudes, institutions, and structures facilitate equitable gains from development and investment.<sup>4</sup> A key measure of 'flourishing' concerns global health equity, where 'health' may be problematized as a multisectoral concept having political, social, economic, and security implications (Chattu et al., 2019). Thus, health emerges as a key facet of 'human security', which remains a fundamental founding principle informing the contemporary liberal international order (LIO).

The resilience and salience of this order have been subjected to acute geoeconomic and geopolitical strain emanating from fractured responses to the pandemic, coupled with the resurgence of protectionist and nationalistic mindsets. Thus, as per Saha and Chakrabarti (2021), non-traditional security threats such as COVID-19 necessitate the reworking of conventional governance mechanisms so as to situate health as a primary concern underlying 'human security' centric economic planning. This further highlights the need for the state to consolidate its role as a significant integration point of multisectoral inclusive policy design. The authors highlight the GHD-centric governance of China and India as signifying how lone statist approaches, grounded in legal-institutional officialdom, fail to correspond with the modalities of unconventional NTS threats.

Similarly, Babic (2021) cites how the pandemic indicates the vulnerability of the LIO to fissures emanating in maladroit socioeconomic and political sectors across states, where scarcity and austerity carry the potential to mobilize mass unrest and instability. The response of existing global governance platforms towards enabling GHD engagement across states is a key barometer for assessing the resilience of the LIO to 'black swan,' i.e. unexpected NTS events, with implications for the future of multilateralism (Gupta et al., 2021).

Thus, in the aftermath of COVID-19, the 'human security' informing LIO style governance is increasingly seen as fundamentally dependent on health security. Further, vulnerable communities, especially in the context of economic deprivation and social marginalization, are seen as more severely impacted by challenges to health security. The suspension of trade and industrial production in light of quarantine and social distancing measures has induced fears of a global recession as economies struggle to restart. To integrate human security into UN initiatives centered on the development and economic growth, bodies such as the Commission on Human Security, established in 2001, have continued to assert that health is a

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<sup>4</sup> For details, please visit: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/positive-peace-report-2020-analysing-factors-sustain-peace>

condition of whole mental, physical, and social well-being in addition to the absence of disease, and that good health is essential to human security because security entails preserving human lives (Commission on Human Security, 2003). For developing societies with poor levels of social cohesion and a lack of citizen confidence in state service delivery, COVID-19 risked reigniting pre-existing conflict sites, e.g. ethnic, sectarian, and class-based fractures etc.

Consequently, by amplifying current conflict causes and accelerating ongoing conflict processes, COVID-19 is now widely recognized as a danger to economic, social, and political stability, spurring the rise of mass civil unrest in regions across the globe. While interventions by state and non-state actors keen to contain the pandemic's impact have acknowledged the pandemic's far-reaching impacts, they have yet to evolve comprehensive schemes for addressing socioeconomic recovery in worst-affected states. However, given the success of bilateral and multilateral initiatives in containing the spread of the pandemic itself, a revival strategy embedded in 'human security' centric GHD initiatives stands to have a broad measure of efficacy.

### **GHD and Multilateralism under the LIO**

Multilateralism emerges as a key pillar of the contemporary LIO, with attendant linkages to the overarching concept of 'human security' in which the order is embedded. A high-level UN Security Council (UNSC) debate in May 2021 stressed the importance of upholding multilateral engagement so as to address emergent security challenges proficiently and peacefully (United Nations Meeting Coverage and Press Release, 2022). The Chinese State Councilor and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Wang Yi, further highlighted the need for the UN to emphasize public health, counterterrorism, climate change and other NTS issues, while citing the challenges posed by the inadaptability of the global governance system.

This emphasis on multilateral engagement has been highlighted by authors from the Global South, such as Rodriguez and Thornton (2022). They examine how countries impacted by a history of colonial exploitation, the precursor to the current geopolitical order, have not simply rejected the LIO as a smokescreen for imperial power. Instead, states, such as those in Latin America, have repeatedly attempted to reform and even strengthen multilateral institutions, with the aim that they hold the leaders of the LIO accountable for their commitments. The need for reform is also stressed by Carayannis and Weiss (2021), citing the role played by supportive non-state actors, i.e. intellectuals, scholars, NGOs, think tanks etc., as a key resource for identifying and enabling policy interventions.

In light of the need for reform highlighted above, authors commenting on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on multilateral engagement cite human security as a critical lens to gauge the nature and scope of needed interventions. Wuchte and Drake (2022) cite a need for multilateral institutions to shift the understanding of security, informing global governance, coupled with a robust response by organizations such as the UN and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in promoting cooperation. Such a shift in understanding is argued to inform China's discourse on multilateralism, as highlighted by Banik and Bull (2022), especially as seen during Chinese outreach to Global South states during the COVID-19 years of 2020 and 2021. Platforms such as the China-Community of Latin America and Caribbean States Forum (China-CELAC) and the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) draw on the normative and analytical frameworks surrounding human security that form the basis for international bodies such as the UN. As per a

technical report for the UNDP prepared by Gomez and Gasper (2022), human security thinking exists as both a policy philosophy connecting peace, development, and human rights, as well as an analytical and policy planning approach necessary for the operationalization of attendant objectives. Consequently, any potential way forward for multilateralism under the LIO must situate prospective institutional reforms in the context of human security, conceptualized through the multisectoral lens of GHD.

It is in this context that the present study examines the Pakistani state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, drawing on the implications of increasingly assertive 'vaccine diplomacy' by China, a key regional and global player, as well as outreach by multilateral organizations aimed at signifying the continued vitality of LIO style GHD engagement under the ambit of 'human security'.

## **Implications of COVID-19 on the Health Sector in Pakistan**

### ***Increase in Mortality and Morbidity Rates***

According to the WHO's latest statistics, in Pakistan, in-between 3 January 2020 and 29 July 2022, there have been 1,551,871 confirmed cases of COVID-19, with 30,474 deaths reported. As of 18 July 2022, a total of 298,381,219 vaccine doses have been administered (World Health Organization, n.d.). The WHO warned the Pakistani government on 23 April 2020, stating that the nation faced a higher risk of COVID19-related mortality and morbidity if the proper measures were not implemented to curb the spread of the infection ("WHO warns Pakistan's COVID-19 cases", 2020).

A survey of the Pakistani healthcare system exposed multiple underlying structural problems, all of which contributed to an unprecedented increase in the mortality and morbidity rates in the country during the first and second waves of the pandemic. As cases mounted, the healthcare facilities were not enough to cater to a population of more than 207 million people.

Pakistan currently has 5527 basic health units, 686 rural health facilities, and 5671 dispensaries (Ministry of Finance, 2019). The impact of inadequate facilities was compounded by negligence, lack of awareness, and an uncooperative attitude by the general public in response to masking and social-distancing mandates. Additionally, self-medication with home remedies and a reluctance to opt for testing led to the delayed diagnoses of patients, hence increasing the risk of higher mortality rates in vulnerable populations.

Non-communicable chronic diseases, such as hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer, are common in Pakistan; between 45 and 80 percent of seniors suffer from one or more of these diseases. Pakistan's healthcare system received a 0.0 index score in the Global Health Security Index 2019 for a number of factors, including emergency preparedness and response planning, worker communication, infection control procedures, equipment availability, cross-border agreements on public health emergency response, and risk communication systems (Global Health Security Index, 2019).

Furthermore, another major reason for the increase in mortality rate was that the health care professionals exhibited limited awareness of the control and prevention measures prescribed for COVID-19 infections. The 'Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination' faced serious deficits in its emergency response facilities, partially prompted by resource constraints. Overall, this is illustrative of the general degree of basic healthcare provision and disease

prevention in the state, where outbreaks of AIDS, dengue, hepatitis, measles, and the resurgence of Polio indicate the need for concentrated reform.

### ***Lack of Drugs, Vaccines, and Supplies***

The unforeseen situation during COVID-19 caused serious disruptions in the global pharmaceutical supply chain, to which Pakistan was no exception (Global Health Security Index, 2021). However, the healthcare system in the country was already lacking pharmaceutical supply chain capacity, added to which was the impact of unreliable pharmaceutical rules and regulations. All these factors culminated in Pakistan's lack of access to important medications during a crucial time, causing healthcare centers to fall short of providing several necessary and life-saving drugs (such as antipyretic, analgesics, and other flu and cough medicines), sanitizers, facemasks and other PPE. Stocks were either unavailable or highly-priced due to low supply and high demand ratios (Javed et al., 2020). The federal government assigned the vaccination task to the 'National Disaster Management Authority' (NDMA), relieving the Ministry of Health of this critical duty, which in turn caused a lack of coordination.

Further, the subsequent disruption in vaccine supplies negatively affected the inoculation procedure. Several other issues, mainly related to key structural gaps, were reported, including the National Institute of Health's (NIH) failure to supply 3 million doses for vaccination. Federal initiatives aside, provincial governments also struggled to launch a comprehensive and coordinated response, with the Punjab and Sindh governments' vaccination campaigns negatively impacting similar shortcomings (Malik & Bhatti, 2021).

### ***Impact on Health Care Workers (HCWs)***

The lack of adequate services and stressful situations during the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted frontline health workers. Low-income nations like Pakistan struggled to provide workers with essential protective resources, with the shortage of PPE causing alarm and distress among care providers who remained highly susceptible to infection. In order to ensure effective healthcare delivery to citizens and to safeguard the healthcare workers as the main line of defense against higher infection rates, the state eventually initiated numerous adjustments for the health and safety of the HCWs.

PPE and vaccine donations by states such as China and the USA proved instrumental in this regard, though a lot remains to be done regarding implementing structural reform initiatives to address institutional gaps. In terms of aid, Pakistan remained reliant on contributions by China as a key geostrategic ally and donations by affluent ex-pat communities in states such as the UK. Both China and the US donated equipment for disease diagnosis and medical personnel security during the COVID-19 crisis. The Pakistani government also established a relief fund to solicit public welfare donations to aid recovery efforts. Social media platforms have been used in several languages to educate the public about preventative actions and reduce cases as new and virulent strains of COVID-19 continue to emerge (Waris et al., 2020).

### ***Foreign Aid and COVID-19 Crisis in Pakistan***

The outbreak of COVID-19, and the ensuing global health emergency, shifted the attention of key global governance institutions towards GHD. Both state and institutional actors have played a significant role in the universalization of health



diplomacy to improve global health standards, health protection, and resilience towards future pandemics. In the contemporary globalized world order, health concerns can no longer be dealt with by states acting in isolation, highlighting the need for a coordinated international response. Recently, during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the epidemics of H5N1 in 2007, H1N1 in 2009, Ebola in 2014, and Zika in 2016, health diplomacy has seen some success.

Hence, states and institutions are striving to improve health diplomacy globally. Responding to the fallout of the COVID-19 crisis in developing countries, international organizations and key states attempted to launch coordinated interventions involving humanitarian aid and funding. According to a World Economic Forum (WEF) report, governments worldwide collectively mobilized \$16 trillion worth of COVID stimulus measures, of which only 1 percent has been directed to help developing countries cope with the impacts of the crisis. The report further highlights how 16 DAC (Development Assistance Committee) nations raised their aid expenditures, with Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Norway, the Slovak Republic, Sweden, and Switzerland seeing the highest increases. In contrast, 13 countries decreased their aid payments, among which Australia, Greece, Italy, South Korea, Luxembourg, Portugal, and the UK stand out (World Economic Forum, 2021).

Despite rising unemployment and significant government spending on national welfare payments, the German development agency raised funding for international health programmes by €3.2 billion (Kobayashi et al., 2020). A 2020 report by the Guardian highlights how the UK's international development secretary similarly announced the country's commitment towards foreign aid to protect lives worldwide by rolling out aid programs worth approximately £744 million.

The United States became a reliable contributor during the pandemic by distributing humanitarian aid programs through the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP). As per a 2021 communique by the US Department of State, the American Government announced more than \$1.5 billion in emergency health, humanitarian, economic, and development assistance, with a focus on supporting governments, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in their efforts to combat the pandemic. Similarly, China also sent medical supplies to more than 150 nations while dispatching healthcare teams to another 27 states in need of assistance (Krutzer, 2020).

Additionally, several international initiatives have been launched to achieve maximum immunization and protection of the people against COVID-19. GAVI (Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization) is a vaccine alliance promoting a global health partnership to aid poor countries in combating health-related systemic and capacity snags. It involves public-private partnerships incorporating the WHO, UNICEF, the World Bank (WB) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. GAVI has the capability to negotiate the prices of vaccines so as to render them affordable for low-income countries categorized as poor.

GAVI supported the vaccination of about 50% of the world's first cohort, in addition to working in close collaboration with governments and their health ministries to support vaccination and response plans. COVAX is another significant initiative by WHO towards the promotion of GHD. The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), GAVI, the WHO, and crucial delivery partner UNICEF led the initiative to ensure equitable vaccine access. The initiative focused on COVID-19 vaccine development and production along with nondiscriminatory and equitable distribution for all nations worldwide. Further, the COVID-19 Vaccine

Delivery Partnership (CoVDP) was established by the Vaccine Alliance, WHO, UNICEF, and GAVI in response to the pressing need to produce sufficient vaccine doses for immunization and the protection of the masses (Gavi staff, 2020). Thus, the CoVDP worked directly with nations to comprehend vaccine barriers and provided access to urgent operational funds and technical support to accelerate the inoculation process.

### **International Development and Humanitarian Assistance for Pakistan amid COVID-19**

International organizations and states extended considerable support towards developing countries like Pakistan to maintain social and economic cohesion during the outbreak of COVID-19. Due to fragile health and economic structures, Pakistan suffered detrimental economic consequences during the various 'waves' of COVID-19. Nevertheless, it managed to scrape through the first and second waves with comparatively lower morbidity and mortality rates due to foreign assistance.

The WHO extended a helping hand towards Pakistan in supporting the 'We Care Campaign' to protect frontline healthcare workers. This campaign was launched at the National Command and Control Centre (NCOC), Islamabad, in June 2020 and worked for the awareness and training of the frontline healthcare workers regarding the 'Infection, Prevention and Control (IPC) regime.' The training of healthcare workers was done in collaboration with the National Health Services Academy (NHSa). Around 1500 healthcare workers were trained under the program.

This campaign linked WHO with Pakistan's Federal Ministry of Health, the NCOC, Provincial Health Departments, and various domestic training institutes, thus establishing a better and more reliable environment to deal with COVID-19 patients. In collaboration with the WHO, China sent medical equipment and PPE to Pakistan. Pakistan received 500,000 surgical masks, 50,000 N-95 masks, and 50,000 testing kits in the first aid batch. The NDMA reported receiving 130 mechanical ventilators and around 14 tons of PPE. Additionally, funding through the WHO enabled Pakistan to mobilize domestic capacity to produce masks, hand sanitizers and protective face shields while launching an inoculation drive to contain the spread of COVID-19 (Jamal, 2020).

Under the COVAX Initiative, since May 2021, Pakistan has received almost 2.4 million doses of AstraZeneca: 100,160 doses of Pfizer; and 2.5 million doses of Moderna. In light of these contributions by international organizations for enabling Pakistan to better deal with the COVID crisis, the state's full vaccination rate has reached almost 55.93 percent, according to the latest immunization statistics. Additionally, under the UN Programme III initiative, the framework of cooperation between the Pakistani government and the UN includes sectors ranging from economic growth and food security, to learning and education. The UN IPC wing has also provided PPE, medical supplies, training for frontline healthcare workers, and assistance in disinfecting schools and hospital buildings, in addition to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities (United Nations Pakistan, 2021).

### **Recommendations**

As states in the developing world continue to struggle with initiating economic recovery drives post-COVID-19 while addressing the risk of emergent variants, the LIO is subject to increasing strain. In light of this, international institutions must formulate global governance mechanisms to address prevalent disparities in healthcare systems and the protracted impact of post-COVID-19 inflationary

pressures. Further, there is a need for the WHO to establish research units of virology and epidemiology across various countries to study the initiation, genesis, impacts and prospects of various microbes and epidemics to prevent/counter unforeseen medical emergencies and pandemics. Given the existing health challenges and growing rates of viral outbreaks across the globe, the developed states must extend their support and resources to bodies like WHO in a concentrated attempt to develop and promote GHD engagement.

Being a developing state, Pakistan has so far weathered the COVID-19 crisis with the help of international organizations and ally donor states. However, a few recommendations must be considered for future action. Considering the health challenges in Pakistan, the NCOC must be made into a permanent and actively functioning body to tackle ongoing epidemics and the risk of future pandemics. Similarly, bodies such as the NDMA must be revitalized in line with a proactive and dynamic approach towards disaster management. Such measures improve the state's preparedness and resilience to deal with health-related emergencies.

Additionally, specialized training programs, including specialized medical disaster training, must be introduced for healthcare workers and medical staff. There is a need to ensure such training extends to hospitals and clinics in far-flung peripheral areas in addition to urban centers, as sporadic access to healthcare remains a key concern, particularly in emergencies requiring coordinated responses across the state's provinces.

Further, Pakistan must introduce GHD mid-and-senior level trainings in both public and private sectors. The goal of the training must be to increase the awareness and recognition of the importance of GHD and its relationship with other critical domains, including economic growth, human rights, trade, and foreign policy decision-making. In recognition of the importance of collaborative GHD engagement in tackling COVID-19 and related threats, Pakistan has now introduced Health Security in its latest National Security Policy (2022-2026), while initiating outreach with both state and non-state actors in addressing the socioeconomic fallout from the pandemic.

## **Conclusion**

In light of the given analysis, it can be concluded that GHD stands revitalized as a diplomatically relevant trend in a world order facing complex challenges. Trends surrounding developmental and humanitarian aid in multilateral forums following COVID-19 showcase the ability of the LIO to proactively respond to emergent crises, while simultaneously highlighting the need for reforms in key institutional mechanisms and processes. The risk of such responses falling prey to geopolitical competition and obstruction remains paramount, especially given the role of an economically ascendant China. The pandemic has highlighted the vulnerability of seemingly impregnable modern systems and showcased the importance of global collaboration in managing NTS threats.

The deadly impact of COVID-19 has prompted both developed and developing countries to highlight several 'human security' centric issues, especially the availability and affordability of effective healthcare services. While interventions by state and non-state actors keen to contain the impact of the pandemic have acknowledged the far-reaching impacts of the pandemic, they have yet to evolve comprehensive schemes for addressing socioeconomic recovery in the worst affected states. In order to integrate human security into UN initiatives centered on development and economic growth, 'health' must be recognized as a multisectoral

concept with economic, social, political, and security implications, with GHD acting as a critical site for reform-centric multilateralism in a post-COVID19 global order.

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## The Russia-Ukraine War: Addressing Possibilities and Challenges for Peacekeeping Mission

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### Introduction

A cursory look at the history of humankind illuminates that there is no glory in war. Championing the principles of sovereignty, statehood, and democracy, today, the west finds itself enmeshed in the quagmire of great power struggles that have tainted European archives since antiquity. With over 100 days since the outbreak of war in Ukraine, political tensions in the west continue to rise, despite the flurry of diplomatic activities. The situation is expected to have intense global ramifications, such as immense loss of life, humanitarian and refugee crises, food insecurity, energy insecurity, regional and global economic challenges, and broader geopolitical shocks (IMF, 2022; Katser-Buchkovska, 2022; Pantuliano, 2022). Nonetheless, the Ukraine war is a setback to the international infrastructure and ideologies of the New World Order (Tisdall, 2022). Furthermore, reminiscent of the cold war period and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) stalemate on matters pertaining to global peace and security, the current US-Russia rivalry over Ukraine can be expected to follow a similar pattern of bottlenecks. Recent developments in the situation follow sanctions on Russia, an increase in US exports of armaments to Ukraine, a blockade of the Black Sea for grain export, and the impossibility of a respite in the near future (Welfens, 2022).

There have been talks of a peacekeeping mission for Ukraine predating the ongoing war, but no tangible framework has been presented yet, particularly due to the active large-scale conflict and disagreements involving UNSC members. More specifically, talks of a Ukraine peacekeeping mission have circled the international arena since the Crimea and Donbas crisis in 2014 (Zavoli, 2017). This essay highlights the debate on the possibilities and challenges of establishing a UN peacekeeping mission for Ukraine. Further, the essay follows a brief review of peacekeeping during the cold war years. By reminiscing on previous decades, the essay situates the current situation of the Ukraine war in the context of challenges faced and lessons learned in peacekeeping from that time of history. In short, a peacekeeping mission to Ukraine can deescalate tensions by immediately enacting a

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ceasefire while engaging the parties to conflict toward peace-making. It would limit the loss of life, property, and the global reverberations of the ongoing war. However, realistically speaking, apart from the US-Russia rivalry, a Ukraine peace mission faces several challenges, such as a realistic mandate, composition of the mission and personnel, and regions of deployment.

### **US-Soviet Rivalry and Détente Peacekeeping**

The cold war period, particularly from 1964 to 1987, saw a relative decline in peacekeeping missions. This ‘détente peacekeeping’ (peacekeeping constrained by superpower rivalries) was also challenged by several other obstacles. These included global political crises, financial restraints, the unfolding process of decolonization, etc. However, the rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union was arguably the chief reason. It hampered the effectiveness of the UN Security Council in response to global peace and security threats. The detente peacekeeping period launched only six peacekeeping operations, compared to seven operations in the next 15 years, 34 peacekeeping operations in 1988, and 21 from 1999 to 2013 (Koops et al., 2015). From the détente peacekeeping period, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), launched in 1978 as a response to assure/monitor the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon, serves as an enduring reminder of how not to authorize and manage a peacekeeping operation. UNIFIL was authorized despite insignificant support by UNSC members, criticism by the UN Secretariat, lack of a clear-cut mandate, and unrealistic demands of the party to the conflict. Years preceding UNIFIL saw a stagnation of the peacekeeping system, with no new peace operation being launched for over a decade (Koops et al., 2015).

Furthermore, despite the numerous challenges aroused by international fragmentation and the influence of superpower tensions of the period, peacekeeping played a crucial role in managing conflicts in which the permanent UNSC members were not a direct party. Such missions affirmed UN peacekeeping as a useful tool for the prevention of ‘wider internationalization of regional conflicts’ and ‘escalation management’, by creating buffer zones between conflicting parties and paving the way for negotiations and peace-making. The effectiveness of UN peacekeeping was highlighted by its role of going in some of the most intractable conflicts of the twentieth century, such as in the case of Arab-Israel, Lebanon, Cyprus, and India-Pakistan. Accordingly, a review of peacekeeping missions since their inception highlights that peacekeeping remains crucial for the ‘multilateral conflict management mechanism’ (Koops et al., 2015).

By the second half of the cold war, peacekeeping began to see a shift from its traditional role of observational and symbolic presence to multidimensional nature with the incorporation of humanitarian aid, human rights, protected areas, protection of civilians, and role/ incorporation of regional organizations (Kercher, 2012). Based on the Charter of the UN and principles of International Humanitarian Law, the multidimensional peacekeeping missions of today are undertaking a broad range of tasks, propelling it as an effective tool for the prevention and management of conflicts (Fortna, 2008).

### **Considering a Peacekeeping Solution for the Ukraine Conflict**

The possibility of a Ukraine peace mission would require UN principles of peacekeeping to be fully incorporated within the mission proposal and mandate. These principles are (1) consent of parties, (2) Impartiality, and (3) Non-use of force except in self-defense. To begin with, for any peacekeeping intervention, an agreement between both Ukraine and Russia would be the foremost requirement.

However, this proposal faces deadlock due to Russian dissent at regional level talks and the Russian veto at UNSC consultations. Although Russia has previously shown interest in forming such a mission, following the Minsk agreement in 2015 with Russian President Vladimir Putin showed openness to the possibility of blue helmets in Ukraine (Carroll, 2015). Two years later, Moscow proposed peacekeepers along the line that divides separatist and Russian forces in eastern Ukraine. However, the experts looked upon the suggestion unfavourably based on doubts and disagreements over the region of deployment and a narrow mandate (International Crisis Group, 2018). After the current war in Ukraine outbreak, Poland was the first to suggest a peace mission to be deployed in Ukraine as an interim measure (“Poland to propose Ukraine peacekeeping mission”, 2022) but failed to present a concrete framework for the mission. Accordingly, in response to the suggestion of the Ukraine Peace mission, UN Director of Crisis Group, Richard Gowan (2022), pointed out the vagueness of the suggestion, stating, ‘it would be unwise to invest too much hope in the prospects for peace operations.’ Gowan’s response to the Ukraine impasse and rising tensions reminisces cold war days of US-Russia rivalry and the inability of the Security Council to decide on matters of concern to both parties. The peacekeeping solution for Ukraine has also been criticized for rendering the existing international tools of conflict settlement as ‘not always effective’. Research explores that while buffer zones, demarcation lines, and peacekeeping missions may help save people’s lives, they would not restore Ukrainian sovereignty over occupied lands (Zamikul, 2017).

Despite the superpower’s deadlock and criticism of the effectiveness of peacekeeping, the possibility of positive contributions of a peacekeeping mission for Ukraine should not be undermined. The effectiveness of a Ukraine peace mission can be understood through the contributions of the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM), launched by the Organization of the Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), to the Donbas region in 2014. Although a multilateral mission of mere 1400 unarmed civilians with the restricted purpose of impartial reporting of the on-ground situation, SMM still contributed to de-escalation in the Donbas from 2014-2019 (Hartel et al., 2021). In furtherance, a Ukraine peace mission comprising a robust mandate and plentiful resources would surely result in net-positive contributions and de-escalation, as seen by SMM in its limited scope.

In support of Ukraine’s peace mission, experts have explored ways to bypass the Russian consent and the UNSC deadlock. Accordingly, alternative routes, such as the possibility of a peacekeeping mission in eastern Ukraine to be established by the UN General Assembly (Zavoli, 2017), have been explored. However, invoking Russian opposition through such processes would be an unwelcoming development. Consent of both parties through diplomatic pathways as per the principles of UN peacekeeping should be emphasized. International and regional actors should continue their insistence on bringing the two parties to the table for peacekeeping consultations. Secondly, according to the principle of impartiality of UN peacekeeping, discussions on which states would comprise the Ukraine peace mission further adds to the stalemate. Parties to the conflict must agree on which states would comprise the mission to keep it impartial. The on-ground situation of the conflict also entails putting the peacekeepers’ life in an unsafe environment. Under such perilous circumstances, the willingness of the troops contributing countries (TCCs) would be a daunting assignment, particularly in the context of the reluctance of the Western states to send their troops on challenging peacekeeping missions (Bardalai, 2022). Furthermore, as proposed by Poland, Kremlin responded negatively to the possibility of a NATO-UN peacekeeping force, stating any contact between Russian and NATO troops as ‘reckless and extremely dangerous’. Experts and officials reiterated the

dangers of NATO and US forces in Ukraine at the start of WWII (Johnson, 2022). However, Russia itself cannot be the sole decision-maker in the situation.

An alternative understanding of peacekeeping and mission composition, particularly from the Russian perspective, further complicates the possibility of Ukraine's peace mission. According to Burkle et al. (2022), Russia's alternative understanding of peacekeeping, such as Putin's announcement on ordering military forces in two separatist regions of Ukraine as 'peacekeepers', legally and traditionally challenges the understanding of peacekeeping missions. While peacekeepers can be from state militaries, they cannot be from the state that is a party to the conflict, as it undermines the principle of impartiality. Furthermore, (Gowan, 2018) examined realistic, long-lasting peace through the likelihood of a peacekeeping mission in the Donbas (Ukraine) and concluded the need for a robust mandate with 20,000 peacekeeping personnel from non-NATO, European countries, such as Sweden, Austria, or Finland. Although published years prior to the ongoing war, the report is still relevant today. It answers pressing concerns on the composition of the peacekeeping mission for Ukraine.

Lastly, apart from the Force Intervention Brigade (IB) in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), with authority to conduct offensive attacks due to the unique mission environment of DRC, UN peacekeeping abides by its principle of non-use of force except for in self-defense. However, peacekeeping tasks depend on the mission mandate, formalized through the consent of the parties. It is likely for Ukraine's peacekeeping mission to be more traditional in comparison with the contemporary multidimensional missions. Despite having a restricted mandate, Ukraine's peacekeeping mission should be given considerable thought by all involved actors. It would not only put an immediate end to hostilities but also limit global economic reverberations of the war while paving the way for future transformations of the region under conflict.

## **Conclusion**

This essay explored the possibilities and challenges of a peacekeeping mission for Ukraine. Despite the superpower rivalry and limitations of the time, the role of peacekeeping in regional conflict management and the creation of buffer zones, particularly in several intractable conflicts of the twentieth century, indicate the net-positive contributions of peacekeeping missions. In the current context of the Ukraine war, the possibility of a peace mission is marred with several inconsistencies. This includes US-Russia rivalry, consent of the parties, the composition of the mission, a clear-cut mandate, and regions of deployment. These inconsistencies also provide challenges for adapting the principles of UN peacekeeping. Yet, research and debates on the topic highlight possible solutions. With regards to the UN principle of consent, since Russia had previously shown interest in blue helmets for Ukraine in 2015, there is a possibility. Secondly, the impartiality of the mission can be maintained through the participation of Non-NATO European states. Lastly, the mission can be expected to be traditional with a narrow mandate and strict abidance of non-use of force except for self-defense. Despite these challenges, the value of a Ukraine peace mission should not be undermined as it holds potential for an immediate cessation of hostilities, limiting the loss of life and property, and can be used as an effective tool for regional conflict management. Therefore, the formulation of such a mission should be given utmost importance.

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## Connecting Peace and Pedagogy in Pakistan

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Natasha Khan<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

Climate change, pandemics, and protracted conflicts: the world seems to be teeming with more problems than humanity can handle. Most of these problems have been caused by humanity itself. While such dissensions pose significant threats, the number of complex conflicts continues to rise (Escola, 2021). Realizing that most of these conflicts stem from our ways of thinking and being, the global community has committed to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to address existing challenges and deal more productively with new ones. SDG 4 (i.e., Quality Education) is one of this United Nations-led initiative's most significant global goals. The Education 2030 vision under United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a vehicle for this, which aims to educate future generations with the skills and knowledge requisite for sustainable living. It thus aims to incur sustainable peace and development through education. To this end, national educational policies and curricula reform have become important indicators of achieving the sustainable development goal of quality education (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], n.d.).

Curricula are now modeled to promote Peace Education (PE) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Both approaches attempt to build a *culture of peace* through holistic education. The culture of peace aims to promote peace by realizing cognitive, behavioral, and social transformations in humans through learning. Human transformation — both at individual and structural levels — is instrumental for broader conflict transformation (UNESCO, 2019). Hence, peace education explicitly promotes a *culture of peace* as part of the wider conflict transformation praxes (Sinclair, 2013)<sup>2</sup>. Such practices are indeed vital in the case of Pakistan, where multiple cultures come together precariously in an overarching *culture of conflict* and intolerance.

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<sup>2</sup> It must be acknowledged at the outset that adopting a (rigid) universal definition of peace, education, or both poses the risk of exclusion. Yet any attempt to explore the subject must take such definitions as the bare minimum point for the departure.

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Pakistan has also made an effort to incorporate peace education into the national curriculum. Adherence to the SDGs and national policy has prompted the development of the Single National Curriculum (SNC), which aims to provide standardized education to improve the nation's human resources, and its potential to meet present and future demands (Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training [MOFEPT], n.d.). With the deadline for these policy commitments less than a decade away, reviewing the progress thus far is prudent. In addition to performing this task, this essay adds to the existing literature on peace education by exploring how context-specific efforts (in Pakistan) can affect conflict transformation. It focuses on *conscientization*, a process key to conflict transformation approaches. Specifically, it focuses on how the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) curriculum has incorporated this process and embedded core peace education values. Hence it situates the national efforts on the broader peace education praxes and explores the potential for conflict transformation through the discursive transformation of individuals and structures in conflict.

### **Conflict, Conscientization and Conflict Transformation**

Conflict remains an inevitable part of the human condition. Several conflicts plague the world at the moment, with new ones emerging every other day. Additionally, such conflicts are becoming increasingly complex beyond the standard models of symmetric conflicts (United Nations [UN], n.d.; also Azar, 1990). While acknowledging such dismal facts, peace and conflict literature also points to the possibility of conflict transformation. Such conflict transformation is quintessentially about changing the dynamics that breed conflict. An important aspect of this is incurring transformations within the individuals and structures involved in the conflict. By accumulating at the broader level, these make up the cultures that allow or exacerbate conflict (Botes, 2003).

This notion of enacting conflict transformation through cultural transformation highlights the importance of pedagogical discourses. It is posited that peace education can encourage the enculturation of peaceful values through conscientization (see Montero, 2011). This is essentially a process of developing the kind of consciousness through which individuals can better respond to conflict. As part of conflict transformation, conscientization targets aggressive assumptions, beliefs, and behaviors directed at the self and others. It foregrounds parochial language, which contributes to different forms of cultural violence by encouraging such attitudes as xenophobia, racism, and intolerance. In its stead, conscientization promotes more constructive ways of thinking by developing a consciousness of one's own language and accompanying beliefs. It posits that despite the difference of opinions and "incompatibility of goals", individuals and structures (in conflict) can develop the ability for constructive communication (Galtung, 1996, p.32; Webel & Khaydari, 2015).

### **Peace, Education and the Culture of Peace**

Peace education is defined broadly as education about human rights, environmental protection, and resilience to violence. It addresses ethical, ecological, and economic issues to sociopolitical, ethnic and religious spheres (Harris, 2008; Kester, 2012). The leading international body promoting peace education, UNESCO, aims to instrumentalize peace education to build *a culture of peace*. The culture of peace is envisioned as enabling the internalization of nonviolence from the individual (micro)



to the global (macro) level (UN, n.d.). Peace education is crucial in promoting such a culture, which directs the development of individuals' personalities towards respect, understanding, and tolerance for all. Thus peace education, as envisioned under the UN, consists of capacity-building for responding to discord in nondestructive ways (UNESCO, 2008) and leveraging human transformation as a means to conflict transformation (UNESCO, 2019).

Accordingly, the literature argues that such capacity building must be based on a holistic approach that develops dynamic potential in the learners to see the *other* in a more humane and tolerable light (Shapiro, 2015). Page (2008), for instance, suggests that peace education may be viewed as a scrutiny of the results of individual and collective in/actions. Peace education, therefore, must enable cognition of underlying values and attitudes that lead to certain behaviors in societies (p.185). This is further supported by literature illustrating that in certain contexts, participant identity and collective narratives interact to pose significant resistance to untailored peace education initiatives. Here peace education must strive to influence strongly-held collective narratives and deeply embedded values (Salomon, 2006). Peace education thus requires context-specificity to challenge existing *cultures of conflict* based on complex psychosocial orientations and belief systems (Worchel, 2005) to equip individuals (as products and producers of culture) with more nuanced ways of thinking.

Such concerns are indeed vital in the case of Pakistan, where multiple cultures come together precariously to produce an overarching *culture of conflict*. Despite existing legal safeguards, the required social change has not followed suit. Growing intolerance and wanton violence against the vulnerable have taken firm roots in the country; children, women and minorities are some of the usual victims of most violent incidents (Alavi, 1989; Hafeez, 2021; Nekokara, 2021). Peace education — through the common discourse of the national curriculum — can thus be instrumentalized for enacting social change in such a violence-prone culture. Embedding a process of constant conscientization can help replace negative and parochial beliefs with unaffected ways of thinking, which materialize the possibility of positive cultural *peace* (Galtung, 1996, p.32). Such positive (cultural) peace legitimizes peace in place of violence by influencing actors and structures at the very foundational levels (Jäger, 2015).

### **Peace Education in Pakistan**

Here it must be noted that peace education efforts in Pakistan are not a novel phenomenon. Several indigenous and international peace education programs have been active in the country (Saeed, 2016; Zainab et al., 2021). Yet most of these programs have failed to drive a concerted, sustainable approach to peace education. This is largely because of the disconnect between such programs at the national level. The lack of public trust also poses a significant challenge.

Additionally, the presence of three parallel education systems in the country further challenges continuity and sustainability (Ahmed, 2017). The SNC has thus come at an opportune time to fill such gaps by creating a unified front to the challenges of violence and conflict at the ideological level. The SNC (guided by the SDG 4 alongside other goals) aspires to inculcate values of “respect and appreciation” (MOFEPT, n.d.), which are vital to combat the growing intolerance in the country, by connecting conflict transformation efforts to Pakistan’s unique context.

## Key Arguments and Concluding Remarks

The findings illustrate that the ECCE does indeed embed the process of conscientization in its content. This is achieved through a focus on *competencies* that aim to build self-awareness in the children through personal, social, and emotional interventions (Early Childhood Care and Education [ECCE] Grade Pre-1, 2020, p.20). Specifically, learning about the similarities and differences (in religion, culture, and language) between people is inculcated (ECCE Grade Pre-1, 2020, pp. 21-22). Concomitantly, values of respect and tolerance for such differences and similarities are incorporated. The ECCE encourages the use of appropriate language and cooperative activities to teach peaceful coexistence (ECCE Grade Pre-1, 2020, p.24). This constitutes a major share of personal and interpersonal competencies (ECCE Grade Pre-1, 2020). Under these competencies, skills such as *recognizing, respecting, and associating* are developed; correspondingly, it teaches constructive conflict resolution through the use of dialogue and *turn-taking*. It addresses the ecological dimension of learning under the “world around us” (ECCE, 2020, p.38), focusing on understanding other living and non-living beings. It further teaches responsible behavior towards all living and non-living things (ECCE Grade Pre-1, 2020, p.39).

These competencies teach tolerance and communication with others. Meaningful conflict transformation in Pakistan requires dialogue and communication to expose and address complex psychosocial orientations and belief systems. The ECCE has incorporated these skills into its syllabus. Introducing and maintaining these skills throughout the learners’ lives can become a powerful discursive tool for both human transformation and conflict transformation.

The ECCE has demonstrated the required comprehensiveness in its content by building competencies across the three important dimensions of personal, interpersonal, and ecological learning. Yet its implementation method will be decisive in bringing about any desired changes. What remains to be seen is how the ECCE can act against the existing social indoctrination systems and how educators can instill these competencies. The complexity of current and coming conflicts demonstrates the pervasiveness of discord not just as a relegated reality to peace but also as a cohabiting constant, especially in the case of Pakistan. While a curriculum teaching peace cannot be the complete cure for an increasingly intolerant society, it can at least become a starting point for some form of emancipation.

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# Dealing with Afghanistan after the US Withdrawal: Challenges and Options for Pakistan

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**Farhan Zahid<sup>1</sup>**

## Introduction

The unexpected turn of events in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of US forces culminated in the fall of the Afghan government to the Afghan Taliban on August 15, 2021. This was an event not many researchers and scholars had predicted. The US invasion of Afghanistan on October 7, 2001, led to the fall of the first Afghan Taliban regime in two months, and the US and its allies landed in Afghanistan to remain for the next two decades. Three consecutive US administrations managed to deal with Afghanistan during those years; it was always known that the US forces had to leave Afghanistan eventually. The US government spent more than \$500 billion in Afghanistan, on both the war effort against the Taliban and on nation-building. The US and its allies were adamant to build an Afghan National Army and other institutions required for an economically viable and thriving nation.

On the other hand, the Afghan Taliban proved a resilient Islamist movement, making the Afghan War (2001-2021) the longest-running conflict in American history. The Afghan Taliban turned out to be adept in asymmetric warfare and took full advantage of the rough and rugged terrain of Afghanistan, benefiting from the support of certain sections of the Afghan population. Since its outset, the War was brutal, and it was difficult for the US and newly recruited and trained Afghan National Defense Forces (ANDF) to contain the Afghan Taliban in rural areas where they ruled large swaths of territory. The election of the Biden administration in January 2021 solidified the inevitability of American withdrawal, as the Democrats pledged to deliver on Trump's Afghan exit. Earlier, the Trump administration had designated Zalmay Khalilzad as the US Special Envoy for leading the peace talks with the Afghan Taliban. With Qatar's mediation, on February 29, 2020, the US and the Taliban signed a peace deal that laid out a timetable for the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. The Taliban agreed to reduce violence against Afghan and foreign forces and to prevent al-Qaida, Islamic State, and other Islamist militants from recruiting and staging attacks using Afghan territory. The US agreed to a complete

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troop withdrawal in 14 months and to facilitate the release of 5,000 Afghan Taliban detainees held in government prisons.

The withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan in July 2021 resulted in the fall of Kabul within a month and the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan. Since the Afghan Taliban are a reality to be reckoned with, Pakistan must calculate policy options for a sound relationship premised on mutual trust and regional security. As the situation in Kabul remains tenuous, national stakeholders must monitor ongoing developments and take calibrated measures to secure Pakistan's interests in the region. This essay outlines and analyzes challenges for Pakistan attending the aftermath of the Afghan withdrawal while proposing tentative avenues for ameliorative action by the state. As per the peace accord commitment, the Biden administration decided to withdraw all US forces from Afghanistan by July 2021. Before this agreement, the US had been assisting the Afghan government with combat support as part of 'Operation Resolute Support,' an advisory and training operation that succeeded Operation Enduring Freedom in 2014. The withdrawal initiated a spike in Afghan Taliban attacks across Afghanistan, in blatant violation of the peace accord. The increase in violence especially attacks targeting military installations of the Afghan government, severely demoralized state troops. The pullback by these forces allowed the Taliban to gain control of operational bases, cities, and, eventually, entire provinces before overrunning the capital on August 15. The Afghan Taliban regime announced the new interim government by the second week of September.

### **Challenges for Pakistan**

The fall of Kabul to the Afghan Taliban militia prompted a spate of both internal and external challenges for Pakistan. The Pakistani state was prepared to field an exodus of Afghan refugees in the event of a civil war between the Afghan Taliban fighters and the Kabul regime. Following Ghani's exit from Afghanistan on the eve of the Kabul takeover, the expected fighting did not occur. Nevertheless, key challenges remain as the Afghanistan of today is no longer the same as Afghanistan ruled over by the Taliban during their first regime, i.e. 1996-2001. It is now a country of 45 million people with a core youth demographic, a percentage of which has been educated in the 15,000 schools opened during the last 20 years. The potential for civil unrest remains, with grave implications for key sectors underlying Pakistan's national security.

### ***Economic and Food Security***

Pakistan is already experiencing serious economic turmoil, with double-digit inflation, an unprecedented increase in energy prices, and a rapidly worsening current account deficit. In this context, the smuggling of food items and other goods to Afghanistan has significantly increased since September 2021, as Afghanistan's dilapidated economy continues to deteriorate under Taliban rule. Trade between the two countries soared after the takeover but remained in Pakistan's favor, with trucks carrying cement, sugar, flour, cooking oil, salt, bananas, and other commodities from Pakistan to Afghanistan increasing from 100 to 400 per day. Trade stood at \$754 million (Sajid, 2021), but it is now likely to increase because of the immense demand for Pakistani goods and food items in Afghanistan amidst a looming food crisis.

The former Federal Finance Minister, Mr Shaukat Tarin, stated that the Pakistani Rupee is falling against the US dollar because of a daily flight of \$15 million from Pakistan to Afghanistan ("Over \$15m per day cash going to

Afghanistan”, 2021). Mr Tarin stressed the need to trade with Afghanistan in the Pakistani Rupee to maintain Pakistan’s depleting foreign exchange reserves (Aslam, 2021). Given the cessation of aid-based revenue and the American seizure of \$9.5 billion in Afghan foreign exchange reserves, the new regime is struggling to tackle both domestic and international payments. In light of this, the smuggling of food items is expected to increase, which would, in turn, prompt further inflation in Pakistan and a shortage of food items in certain parts of the country. The two states must cooperate over food security in the short term to expand long-term economic linkages.

According to a recent estimate by the UN World Food Program (WFP), the number of people on the verge of famine in Afghanistan stands at three million (“UN food agency”, 2021). If left unaddressed, an immediate consequence for Pakistan would be a mounting influx of Afghan refugees. In the aftermath of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan hosted approximately 3.5 million refugees, of which roughly 1.4 million remain in the country. Pakistani authorities have calculated that an expected arrival of additional 700,000 refugees would constitute a burden of \$2.2 bn (“Afghans Flee to Pakistan”, 2021) on the national exchequer.

According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), around 28,000 Afghans have already arrived in Pakistan after the Taliban takeover (Joles, 2021). The situation in Afghanistan is mercurial and constitutes both challenges and opportunities for Pakistan. On the economic front, strenuous measures are required to support a falling Afghan currency and a collapsing economy. Domestic economic woes leave Pakistan hard-pressed to handle the fallout from a full-blown collapse, particularly in light of attendant humanitarian costs. A key concern remains the impact of refugee flows on an increasingly tenuous internal security landscape. Pakistan is in no position to entertain another wave of Afghan refugees amassing at a characteristically porous border and crossing-over into two of the states’ poorest provinces.

### ***Terrorism***

The issues arising from such an influx may be seen from the lens of both traditional (terrorism) and human security (food/economic). The former relates to the action of militant outfits, i.e. the TTP and IS-K, with IS-K shifting its center of operations from Afghanistan to adjacent Pakistani urban spaces in an attempt to circumvent attacks by the Afghan Taliban. Concerning the TTP, the Afghan Taliban have so far demonstrated palpable reluctance in curbing and controlling the outfit’s operations. It is pertinent to mention that during the last 20 years of the TTP’s existence, the Afghan Taliban have never outright condemned the group and their terrorist attacks in Pakistan.

Immediately after taking over, the Taliban authorities released around 700 Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) prisoners from Afghan jails. Among their number was Molvi Faqir Mohammad, ranked second in TTP high command (“Taliban releases TTP’s Maulvi Faqir Mohammad”, 2021). He was arrested by the National Directorate of Security (NDS) in 2012 while crossing into Afghanistan. Other top TTP terrorists released by the Afghan Taliban included Waqas Mehsud, Hamza Mehsud, Zargawi Mehsud, Baitullah Mehsud, Qari Hameedullah Mehsud, Hameed Mehsud, and Mazhar Mehsud. The Afghan Taliban have released more than 2,300 prisoners from Afghan prisons in Kabul, Kandahar, and Jalalabad.

Further, the Afghan Taliban have not taken concrete action to contain and control TTP militants operating from Afghan territories, especially in the south-



eastern provinces of Nangarhar, Paktia, and Paktika. Regarding their role in facilitating talks between Pakistan and the TTP, it is unclear whether the Afghan Taliban would push the TTP to sign a peace accord with the Pakistani state. Considering this, it may be argued that Pakistan will eventually have to take a hands-on approach to tackle the TTP and associated groups such as Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K). An additional consideration for traditional security is the impact of the Taliban victory emboldening the radicalized and extremist individuals and groups operating within Pakistan. The Taliban's victory also redefines the ties between increasingly assertive religious groups and the Pakistani state.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Two immediate challenges in addressing the fallout of the American withdrawal concern stabilizing an economy in free fall and addressing the attendant impact on food and economic security. For two decades, the Afghan economy was bankrolled by the US and its western allies. Following the Taliban takeover, aid-based revenue has dried up, and the US has frozen vital foreign exchange reserves while isolating the new regime. The situation carries grave risks for Pakistan and demands an urgent and coordinated response by all major federal government departments and the state's security apparatus. The following recommendations list avenues for further academic and policy intervention:

- Calculating the potential of the Afghan economy with a focus on sectors such as agriculture and human resource training
- Firmly controlling borders to tackle smuggling
- Engaging the Afghan Taliban to cooperate with Pakistani security forces to curb the terrorist designs of TTP and IS-K.

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**From Multiculturalism to  
Integration: The Role of Muslim  
Women in the Implementation of  
Ethno-Religious Minority  
Policies in the UK (2001-2016)**

by *Abeeda Qureshi*

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**Sara Ahmad<sup>1</sup>**

**Introduction**

This book is written in the context of the 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005 suicide attacks on the London underground train and bus transit system, which have come to be known as the 7/7 bombings, and were the only major terrorist attacks that have affected London during this century. Three British-born Muslims from Pakistani immigrant families, and one Jamaican who converted to Islam, were involved in these events. Since the incident, prejudice has been held towards Muslims, and the British government then decided to review its counter-terrorism policy, which had focused on foreign threats earlier.

This book entitled ‘From Multiculturalism to Integration: The Role of Muslim Women in the Implementation of Ethno-Religious Minority Policies in the UK (2001-2016)’ authored by Abeeda Qureshi, presents a comprehensive analysis of the role of Muslim women activists and their engagement with political and governance processes in the UK between these dates. It also examines the coordination of the government with Muslim women during the formulation and implementation of the post-9/11 and 7/7 Preventing Violent Extremism policies (PVE). The role of Muslim women was considered necessary regarding policymaking toward the Muslim community living in the UK. Scholars have mostly overlooked the involvement of Muslim women in public policies; however, this book highlights the positive role of non-elected Muslim women activists in countering extremism and radicalization.

All the chapters are thematically arranged and well-illustrated, set in a historical context and a contemporary scenario. It is written as a formal piece of scholarly research writing. The arguments are well structured and offer a comprehensive account of the role of women in peace and security.

Following the introduction, the second chapter proposes the theoretical framework and highlights its relevance and implications. A ‘de-centered’ approach was taken for the policymaking process with the combination of two theoretical frameworks: the ‘hybrid’ model for policy implementation, to explain the role of Muslim women and local actors in interpreting the national policy to suit local needs,

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and the 'representation theory' to describe the active involvement of Muslim women activists in the policy process. These theories are applied to explain the national, local and individual levels of analysis.

The third chapter discusses the key terms and concepts such as multiculturalism, integration, and inter-culturalism used by different theorists to manage socio-cultural diversity in response to large-scale migration to Europe during the post-second world war period. The 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US, the riots of the summer of 2001 in northern Britain, 7/7 in London, and the fact that the people involved in the terrorist acts were the products of multicultural societies, raised a new debate about the relevance of multiculturalism in the changing socio-political environment.

The fourth chapter traces the policies in the UK toward its minorities and discusses the development in the history of race relations. It examines the measures taken by the government to integrate its ethno-religious minorities and further discusses Britain's response to the post-2001 riots. Since the 2001 disturbances, a new policy was adopted, named 'community cohesion,' while in response to the London bombings in 2005, PVE was introduced as a counter-terrorism strategy aimed at addressing the issues of extremism and radicalization.

The fifth chapter investigates and examines the engagement of elected and non-elected women representatives at the national level in informing and implementing the PVE policies introduced by the British government. Muslim women activists were seen to be in a much better position, and their involvement in the policy process has become more systematic and institutionalized. The sixth chapter examines the policies and cooperation between the government and Muslim women activists at a local level. To analyze policy execution at local levels, the author selected the town of Luton as a suitable case study because extremist tendencies had been found there, and it is the largest Muslim-populated area in the UK. The seventh chapter traces the history of the political representation of Muslim women in the British parliament and further highlights the descriptive and substantive representation of Muslim women. The last chapter presents the conclusions, summarizes the discussions, and highlights the key findings of the study.

The vital role played by elected and non-elected women representatives belonging to ethno-religious minorities in the policy process will encourage other communities to participate in the policies actively. Women activists or non-governmental organizations have the access and knowledge to understand the problems of the community concerned compared to elected representatives. The government should consult the respective community before taking any policy decisions because imposing laws from the top is ineffective. Policymakers in Pakistan can follow the policy model as explained in this book for the success of any policy.

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