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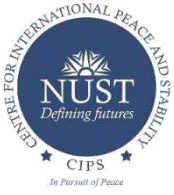
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At the Centre for International Peace and Stability (CIPS), the Department of UN Peacekeeping Training (PKT) and the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies (PCS) have been collaborating for their mission of global peace and stability. The NUST Journal of International Peace & Stability (NJIPS) is one of the milestones in this regard, aiming to provide research-based knowledge through the scholarly papers written by national and international authors. CIPS proudly released the first Volume of NJIPS in November 2017. Ever since, the defining aim of the journal has been to revivify the understanding of contemporary peace and conflict dynamics in order to address the most ruinous predicaments to international development and peace.

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NUST JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL PEACE & STABILITY

Volume 7 Issue 1 January 2024

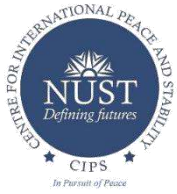
NUST Journal of International Peace & Stability (NJIPS) is published by the Centre for International Peace & Stability (CIPS) at NUST Press.

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Internalization of Responsibility to Protect (R2P): Responsibility to Invoke ‘Peace from Within’ Afghanistan by the Taliban Regime (2021)

NUST Journal of International Peace & Stability
2024, Vol. 7(1) Pages 1-19



njips.nust.edu.pk

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.37540/njips.v7i1.165>

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Abstract

Sovereignty, concerning state authority, endows the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) the rights of citizens. This redefined and broadened scope of sovereignty is ascribed to the international norm of the R2P. The pioneering assertions of R2P were conceptualized by the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in ‘Two Concepts of Sovereignty’ after NATO intervened in Kosovo (1999). During a humanitarian crisis, the more serious concern lies in the unchecked systematic violations of human rights rather than the question of the legitimacy and legality of intervention by the international community. In the 2005 World Summit, Sovereignty was redefined as an R2P by the state against atrocious violations of human rights. In case of failure of the host state, the international community could intervene through the Security Council. This paper will implicitly consider the normative contours of the R2P framework while assessing the current multifaceted humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. The post-war humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is characterized by poverty and internal displacement. Additionally, human security concerns arise from the inter-group rivalry between the Islamic State Khorasan (ISK) and the Taliban, accompanied by human rights violations against women and ethnic minorities under the Taliban regime. Aligning with the first pillar, the responsibility to protect Afghan citizens rests with the Taliban as the sovereign authority of the state. However, internalizing the principles of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) can pave the way for prospective peace in Afghanistan.

Keywords

Responsibility to Protect (R2P), Humanitarian Crisis, Human Rights, Afghanistan, Taliban

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Received 20 September 2022; Revised 18 December 2023; Accepted 20 December 2023; Published online 31 January 2024

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Introduction

When conflict impacts the population and society, peace necessitates humanitarian action, and governance prioritizes human welfare, security entails human protection, and safety and sovereignty call for human rights preservation. Since the post-evacuation phase following the withdrawal of US forces starting from August 2021, the Afghan predicament has transitioned towards a peace-centric paradigm.

While prioritizing the agenda of human welfare, a critical concern is addressing the collapse and failure of Afghanistan's social infrastructure. The focus should be on tackling the humanitarian crisis rather than engaging in debates about who is responsible for the current situation. The incumbent Taliban government, currently the de facto authority, bears the responsibility to promote peace, mitigate the ongoing humanitarian crisis, and safeguard Afghan citizens. The government has a dual responsibility, not only to protect citizens from the aftermath of war and withdrawal but also to address human rights violations, both those induced by the regime itself and those stemming from factional rivalries.

The twenty-year War on Terror (WoT) ended on August 25, 2021. While categorizing the winner and loser of the war in terms of the NATO forces or the Taliban has been widely debatable, the vulnerable victims have irrefutably remained the Afghan people. The exit of the US raised hopes for a peaceful and stable Afghanistan, yet it also sparked concerns about the potential failure to achieve lasting peace. However, the long war had a devastating impact on the socio-economic infrastructure of the Afghan society. Within weeks of the US exit, a humanitarian crisis affected 25 million Afghan people—an alarming figure double that of 2011. By 2023, nearly half of the population, around 17 million, faced food insecurity, with 6 million at an emergency level (Humanitarian needs overview, 2023). Approximately 3.5 million people were internally displaced, while millions struggled to survive amidst increasing poverty and lacking access to essential social services (Government, 2022).

Amidst this humanitarian crisis, described as of 'unprecedented scale' (United Nations Country Team in Afghanistan, 2023), the Taliban Supreme Leader's imposition of *Sharia Law* since November 2021 has led to systematic and widespread human rights violations by the regime, constituting elements of crimes against humanity. The Taliban's stringent control over freedom of expression, media, and women's rights has been accompanied by repressive measures and inhumane punishments against opponents, including arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial executions, torture, enforced disappearances, and flogging (Women's rights in Afghanistan, 2023).

The US two-decades-long war, which concluded with a peace deal with the Taliban in 2020, highlights that the military option did not prove to be a favourable solution to the Afghan dilemma. The Taliban, once considered non-state armed actors, transformed into a legitimate state authority. The armed conflict, leaving behind a wretched socio-political, economic, and security state, embroiled the Afghan population into another episode of catastrophic humanitarian crisis.

The dysfunctional governance by the Taliban and fragmented institutional infrastructure-coupled with the Taliban's version of *Sharia law* imposed, have further disrupted the state of human rights against women and ethnic minorities. The de facto Taliban regime yet awaits de jure recognition by the international community to formally build diplomatic ties with the other countries. The de jure recognition, considering various political aspects, remains partially conditional on the effective role of the Taliban in addressing violations against women and minority rights. Nevertheless, the responsibility to protect Afghan civilians fundamentally rests with

the Taliban government. Along with the administrative challenges, the emergent/persisting security threat posed by non-state actors like Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K) and the inter-group rivalry between the Taliban and the IS-K has further exacerbated the security matrix in Afghanistan. This paper, in line with the theoretical contours of the international norm of R2P and its first two pillars, assesses the critical aspects of and the role of actors in the current crisis in Afghanistan. The norm of R2P as the ‘shared expectations’ within international society stipulates that:

<i>Pillar-I:</i>	States themselves should protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.
<i>Pillar-II:</i>	In case of failure, other states should assist one another.
<i>Pillar-III:</i>	Lastly, the international community should assertively act to protect the suffering populations.

The study aims to trace the prospective non-military options for addressing the current Afghan crisis, especially in international and international human rights law. Due to the futility of military options by the US in Afghanistan accounting for the current crisis, the exogenously ‘enforced’ and ‘military’ version of R2P is not applicable in the case of Afghanistan. Therefore, the *Pillar-I* of R2P should be internalized and institutionalized, primarily by the Taliban government, with supplementary international assistance. This can help strengthen the political legitimacy and administrative authority of the Taliban regime, thus paving the way towards a viable solution to the structural and institutional problems and peace in Afghanistan. Moreover, the de jure recognition of the Taliban government, partially conditional on the responsibility to protect women and minority rights by the Taliban, can induce further humanitarian aid and assistance by the international community (pillar II).

Theoretically, for a dynamic crisis management approach, Pillar I of R2P would be broadened to include the humanitarian crisis aspect that has deteriorated Afghanistan's already worsened human rights situations. Unlike the third pillar of R2P that has been invoked for ‘humanitarian intervention’ in various crises like Kosovo and Syria, this paper argues that the first two pillars of R2P, at this very point of the humanitarian crisis, may be internalized on the pretext that, responsibility to protect is fundamentally a ‘state responsibility’ and later a ‘shared responsibility.’ For the theoretical part of the study, primary sources used have been books and journals, whereas, for the latest statistical data of the current humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, reports by different UN bodies, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International have been consulted at large.

Responsibility to Protect R2P Norm: From ‘State Responsibility’ to ‘Shared Responsibility’

The concept of sovereignty and the treatise on human rights have played a fundamental role in establishing a modern international system and have influenced the discourses in international law. A relevant but contested notion of the concept of sovereignty and concern for human rights has been ‘humanitarian intervention.’ While the state’s internal sovereignty confers the moral responsibility of citizens’ welfare and safety and protection of their rights and security on the political authority, external sovereignty sanctified the Westphalian principle of non-intervention as state responsibility towards each other.

The norm of humanitarian intervention (though morally justified if not legally defended) emerged as a balancing universal norm in the twentieth century to ban and stop state-induced atrocities. For instance, the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in 1978 resulted in the ouster of the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime. Over time, the concept of sovereignty has evolved to encompass the dual notion that sovereignty not only bestows privilege but also entails domestic and international responsibility. Simultaneously, there is a global responsibility to protect individuals facing the threat of mass atrocities (Thakur, 2019).

The intellectual and political origin of R2P started appearing in the 1990s within the academic discourse when the concept of ‘sovereignty as responsibility’ was developed by Francis Deng (the UN’s Special Representative on Internally Displaced Persons) and Roberta Cohen (a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution). In the pre-R2P era, however, the cases that highlighted the contested nature of the humanitarian intervention norm and helped pave the way for the introduction of R2P were:

<i>Rwanda (1994):</i>	Inadequate international response to genocide.
<i>Bosnia (1995):</i>	UN’s inability to prevent ethnic cleansing in Srebrenica.
<i>Kosovo (1999):</i>	NATO intervention without UN authorization (China and Russia voted to restrain) halted Serbian atrocities.

As noted by Evans (2004), the mentioned cases sparked academic debates and international controversy regarding the responsibility of the UN and the scope of state sovereignty concerning questions related to the right, necessity, and authority of intervention.

It was in 1999 when the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan proposed and insisted on the role of the international community in coupling the twin principles of sovereignty as the protection of self-determination and fundamental human rights. He based his assertion on the question that “if the humanitarian intervention was to be discredited as an assault on state sovereignty, how systematic violations of human rights like those in Rwanda could be halted.”(Evans, 2004, p. 79) The Canadian government then created the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), which formulated the theoretical foundations of R2P, the fundamental essence adopted by the UN World Summit 2005 (Bellamy, 2009).

At the UN’s 2005 World Summit, the world leaders unanimously adopted a declaration R2P to protect populations from the scourge of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. As defined by Ivan Šimonović (2016) (Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect), the responsibility to protect rests upon three pillars of equal standing:

<i>Pillar-I:</i>	The responsibility of each state is to protect its populations.
<i>Pillar-II:</i>	The responsibility of the international community is to assist states in protecting their populations.
<i>Pillar-III:</i>	The responsibility of the international community is to protect when a state is manifestly failing to protect its population.

Further elaborated in *para 139 of UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/60/1*, adopted on September 20, 2005 (p.30):

The international community, through the United Nations, also has the responsibility to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian, and other peaceful means, in accordance with Chapters VI and VIII of the Charter, to help protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. In this context, we are prepared to take collective action in a timely and decisive manner through the Security Council, following the Charter, including Chapter VII, on a case-by-case basis and in cooperation with relevant regional organizations as appropriate, should peaceful means be inadequate and national authorities are manifestly failing to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Like any other conceptual narration of international law, R2P has also been interpreted by states in various ways. The skeptics outrightly oppose R2P on the pretext of the norm of non-interference by international institutions in states' domestic affairs. As Bellamy (2006) notes, Cuba, Pakistan, Algeria, Iran, Zimbabwe, and Venezuela are examples of this category of states opposing R2P, whereas India, the Philippines, China, and Russia prioritize the purpose of R2P—the prevention and halting of genocide and mass atrocities. According to states like China, the main issue is not interference in the domestic affairs of other states by the international community but rather the politicization and potential abuse by states that might use R2P arguments to justify their unilateral and self-interested interventions. On the contrary, the EU supported the adoption. Canada, Japan, South Korea, several sub-Saharan African states, and Rwanda defended R2P with a view expounded by South Africa that in case of inability or failure of protection by governments, a collective responsibility to protect humanity rests with the international community of nations.

On the persisting controversy regarding the interpretation of R2P, Rotmanna et al. (2014, p. 356) argue that the debates around R2P help analyze the conflicts within the dynamics of changing global order “in a way that focuses on sovereignty and responsibility, universalism and exceptionalism, hypocrisy, and selectivity.” They premise their argument on the reinforced and empowered role of the non-state actors vis-à-vis states. The non-state actors have emerged as crucial security threats that must be duly recognized to (re)legitimize military intervention for humanitarian purposes. Such an approach is backed by human rights advocates and governments of ‘minor powers’ such as Canada, Rwanda, and the Netherlands. Regardless of the state interpretation, the central theme of R2P is ‘sovereignty,’ which provides order, stability, and predictability in international relations between legitimate (sovereign) states.

Thakur and Weiss (2009), while drawing the difference between internal and external sovereignty, highlight the dual responsibility of sovereignty, that is, “externally to respect the sovereignty of other states, and internally, to respect the dignity and basic rights of all the people within the state” (p.26). The threefold significance as maintained by such notion of ‘sovereignty as responsibility’ are:

- First, it holds state authorities responsible for the welfare and protection of citizens.
- Second, it suggests the internal responsibility of political authorities towards citizens and external responsibility towards the international community of states and the United Nations.

- Third, it proposes accountability of state agents for their acts of commission and omission.

Thus, “Sovereignty no longer implies the license to kill,” quotes Thakur and Weiss (2009, p.23) while writing on the evolution of R2P “From Idea to Norm—and Action?”. On the question of prioritizing either the protection of the human population or the nonintervention principle, Thakur and Weiss further argue that the contest between sovereignty and human rights can no longer be exploited due to the normative development that authorizes the use of military force to protect human beings. While the essence of the R2P is fundamentally normative and ethical, the use of military force may be politicized by various interest groups that may not necessarily acquire the desired outcomes. The methodical aspects may differ per the situational context and in light of the three pillars of R2P.

Considering the above discussion on state sovereignty, it can thus be inferred that *Pillar-I* and *Pillar-II* of R2P are liable to be implemented by the states themselves to avoid the humanitarian intervention conducted by the international community. If the state fails to protect its civilians from internally induced mass atrocities, it may lead to a humanitarian crisis that may call for assistance from the international community. The second pillar ensures joint commitment and partnership between the international community and the state. The joined partnership may be covert/overt based on activities like training, education, assistance, humanitarian aid, mediation, and dialog (Small, 2014).

Exploring Afghanistan’s Humanitarian Crisis: Faces and Challenges

Afghanistan has distinctly been one of the states with a long history of foreign interventions and sectional divisions, facing the menace of political unrest and the rise and fall of regimes. Its modern history of uninterrupted political upheavals dates to the 1980s proxy war between the US-led coalition and the former USSR. The Soviet forces continued their fight against the guerilla forces of the Mujahedeen between 1978 and 1992. Amongst the Mujahideen fighters, a faction called the Afghan Taliban emerged in 1994 and established a Sharia government in 1996 that lasted till 2001. With the turn of the 9/11 incident, the US-led coalition drove the Taliban out of government. The Taliban, as non-state actors, then indulged in guerilla warfare against the US-backed Afghan government and the military forces until the evacuation of the US forces and rose to power in August 2021 as the incumbent regime.

In the backdrop of a decades-long war on terror and the withdrawal of foreign forces, Afghanistan finds itself at the epicenter of an afflictive humanitarian crisis. According to the World Food Program (2023a), by March 2023, 15.3 million Afghans faced acute food insecurity, with 2.8 million Afghans facing emergency-level conditions and 3.5 million children suffering from malnutrition. Inaccessibility is a significant factor in hindering the relief process by the UN and its partners. In 2023, Afghanistan’s economy is still vulnerable, with the decline in international aid for humanitarian and essential services and a mix of economic indicators. With limited financial transactions, the trade and other payments are mainly carried through informal channels. The economic downturn has also affected the banking system and private businesses. With the improvement in households to meet basic needs, compared to the crash of 2021, about 20 million people, who constitute half of the population, are currently poor (consumption levels below the national poverty line) (World Bank, 2023).

Amidst such economic vulnerability and social volatility, another critical aspect of the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan has been the internal and cross-border displacement of the Afghan population and the return of those refugees that have already started in 2023. According to the UN migration agency, in the post-conflict phase in 2021, about 700,000 Afghans left their homes, adding to the 5.5 million displaced people over the past years (IOM Comprehensive Action Plan, 2021). Over 12,000 of these Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan in the first nine months of 2023, with another 60,000 refugees and 300,000 IDPs returnees expected in 2024 (Afghanistan Situation, n.d.). The influx of returnees back to Afghanistan not only poses challenges for the humanitarian partners regarding humanitarian relief but also becomes a vital challenge for the Taliban government.

Also, while the war-torn country has already been struggling with the devastations of post-war poverty and humanitarian crisis, it has been exposed to the sufferings caused by natural calamities like drought and earthquake. The June 2022 earthquake of magnitude 5.9 struck southeastern Afghanistan, leaving over 770 deaths and approx. 1,500 were injured, and 362,000 needed humanitarian assistance (US Agency for International Development [USAID], 2022). In October 2023, another earthquake of 6.3 magnitude that struck western Afghanistan left 2,000 dead, over 4,000 people injured, and 1,400 displaced (World Food Program, 2023b).

Along with the post-war humanitarian crises, there are many other governance, human rights, and security challenges equally faced by the Afghans and the Taliban regime that entreat responsibility and effective response mechanisms primarily by the regime. These are discussed in the following sections.

The Intractable Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K) within and Beyond Afghanistan

The Global Terrorism Index Report 2023, issued by the Institute for Economics and Peace (2023), recorded 633 deaths (lower than 1426 deaths in 2022). The overall number of deaths from terrorist incidents was 58% less compared to 2022. Globally, 9% of terrorism-related deaths occurred in Afghanistan, making it the most terrorism-affected country for the fourth consecutive year. Most of the victims are reported to be civilians. The widespread terrorism affected 26 of 34 provinces in the year 2023. After the take-over of the Taliban, IS-K remains the most potent terrorist group, as, in 2022, it accounted for 67% of total terrorism-related deaths.

The fundamental security concern for Afghanistan in the post-US withdrawal has persisted in the terrorist threat and its evolving nature and scope. Despite the contesting camps on the question of whether terrorist militants will want or resurge with more vigor, the fact remains that there will be some traces, the sustainability of which depends on the effective countermeasures that are not yet determined. The threat from al Qaeda and Islamic State Khorasan IS-K chapter remains at large; the Taliban, however, may not pose a direct threat as an insurgent or terrorist organization. Taliban leadership may be limited to either assist or at least be indifferent to the plots charted by Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State in Afghanistan.

Whereas the US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo disregarded any meaningful threat posed by Al-Qaeda (Musto, 2020), David Petraeus (the former CIA chief and commander of US troops in Afghanistan) had been apprehensive of Taliban's gesture regarding intra-Afghan peace talks that it may assist Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State to resurge (Seligman et al., 2021). Furthermore, since 2015, Al-Qaeda's resilience and the Taliban's political cohesion remain to be intact. On the contrary, the Islamic State in Afghanistan is weakened and fragmented, yet some factions already defected towards

the Taliban are engaged in intermittent activities in urban centers. Al-Qaeda has been persistently resilient in gaining relevance through the establishment of its franchise Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) in 2014 and by cementing its alliance with Afghan Taliban and by helping the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) to regroup (Mir, 2020).

As per the development assessed by the UN Security Council report: Fourteenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security (2022, p.7):

The group (IS-K) is taking advantage of the turmoil in the country, including by recruiting fighters from the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement and the Turkistan Islamic Party, among other foreign terrorist groups. It aims to position itself as the chief rejectionist force in Afghanistan and to expand into neighboring Central and South Asian countries and is viewed by the Taliban as its primary armed threat. Member States are concerned that, if Afghanistan descends into further chaos, some Afghan and foreign violent extremists may shift allegiances to Da'esh.

While historicizing the emergence of the ISK, Rana and Sial (2022) comprehensively recount the strength and working of the ISK. The ISK in Afghanistan emerged in 2014, and Hafiz Saeed (TTP's former leader) was appointed as the first head. As much as it witnessed a rapid rise in Afghanistan between 2014-2016, enticing membership in thousands, a steady decline has been evident since 2018 due to the counter-terrorism operations by the US and Afghan military. Their losses have been further aggravated due to the Taliban's military campaigns. The group is already on the verge of decline due to defections or killing of leaders, territorial loss, and fragmentation of battlefield allies.

Since the Taliban took hold of the government in August 2021, 32 attacks have been conducted by the IS-K against the Taliban, causing 54 deaths. Following the Taliban's takeover of power after the fall of Kabul in August 2021, ISK emerged as the most active terrorist group in Afghanistan. The Kabul attack at the International Airport during US troops evacuation in August 2021-the deadliest (since 2007) was claimed by the IS-K that killed about 170 people while leaving 200 injured, including civilians. Throughout 2022, IS-K was responsible for 115 incidents and 422 deaths, accounting for almost 67 percent of total terrorism-related deaths in the country. It also carried the country's deadliest attacks of the year in 2022, each resulting in the deaths of 50 civilians. The future pattern and intensity of terrorist activities by the IS-K will depend on its mobilization and the effectiveness of response by the Taliban government. The persisting strategic and ideological rivalry between the Taliban and the IS-K is expected to increase the attacks and causality rates in the future. Being in government makes the Taliban more liable for the counter-terrorism measures against the IS-K (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2023).

Regarding the future of the Islamic State in post-US Afghanistan, there are varied speculative assertions. These include potential resurgence, further decline, absorption into defecting Taliban factions, increased support from the Haqqani Network, or utilization of spoiler violence by regional countries to disrupt the peace process. Despite its current weakness, the primary source of strength for the Islamic

State in Khorasan (ISK) might stem from recruiting individuals in Afghanistan and beyond, mainly through affiliations with regional jihadist networks (Mir, 2020).

Amid the current humanitarian crisis, the ISK may gain potency and strength as well as increase its recruits by exploiting tensions between the Afghans and the Taliban. Such developments may not only exacerbate the ongoing humanitarian crisis and security situation but also pose a challenge to the Taliban as they endeavor to manage relief efforts for the population and enhance economic conditions.

With more than 90% of the population suffering from some form of food insecurity and the international and Western suspension of aid, the health and food sectors may suffer regressively. Additionally, in the context of security and counterterrorism, the Taliban may attempt to counter the IS-K by supporting other groups like al-Qaeda. This apprehension is premised on the intelligence reports regarding the hideout of the al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, who was killed in July 2022 because of a US drone strike in Kabul and was suspected to have been given refuge by a Taliban aide. Nevertheless, the stronger IS-K, the more stringent rivalry between the IS-K may garner eventual Taliban's (state) support of terrorism. This could further aggravate the current crisis due to restraining Afghanistan's access to international markets or the delivery of humanitarian aid (Lindsay, 2023).

The State of Human Rights Under the Taliban Regime in Afghanistan

As soon the Taliban took hold of the government in August 2021, there were speculations and contested views on whether the new Taliban regime would be different from the previous one (1996-2001) in the conduct of its rules and policies, particularly with regard to the women and minority rights. After two years, however, due to the massive violation of fundamental women and girls' rights and other civil rights, the UN human rights experts denounce the "reformed" image of the Taliban (Afghanistan: UN human rights, 2023). With the pronouncement of Sharia law in November 2021, the Taliban not only started a series of public executions and floggings but also indulged in revenge politics.

Despite announcing "general amnesty" for the former officials of the government and former members of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF), the Taliban-as the de facto authority- carried extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, detentions, torture, and ill-treatment on suspicion of victims being rebel (A Barrier to Securing Peace, 2023). Over 300 extrajudicial executions were carried out by the Taliban between August 2021 and December 2022, 100 publicly flogging (Amnesty International Report, 2023), and over 424 arbitrary arrests and detentions and 144 instances of torture and ill-treatment of former government officials and ANDSF have been reported (A Barrier to Securing Peace, 2023).

The Taliban also targeted various civil and political rights of the Afghan population, including freedom of expression, association, demonstration, and assembly. Numerous media outlets were shuttered, and journalists and protesters critical of the regime faced repression through arbitrary arrests, forced disappearances, unlawful detentions, and torture, prompting many to flee the country. National human rights institutions like the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) and civil society organizations were also closed. The fear of persecution by the Taliban compelled a significant number of Afghans to seek refuge outside the country. Those attempting to flee were met with violence, including shootings, and denied appeals for asylum, leaving many with limited access to resources and

fundamental human rights. This dire situation has resulted in an estimated 3.8 million internally displaced Afghans (Amnesty International Report, 2023).

Women's Rights under the Taliban Regime

Women in Afghanistan have historically been segregated due to deeply ingrained tribal, religious, and patriarchal norms, shaping much of the cultural and political history of the country. The quest for women's rights commenced in the nineteenth century, with different regimes employing diverse approaches to implementing social reforms. Amanullah initiated the first social reforms to improve women's status, followed by Zahir Shah and the communist regime.

Women's rights in Afghanistan experienced steady progress until the 1970s. The journey began with the right to vote granted in 1919 (just a year after the UK and a year before the US granted voting rights to women). The abolition of purdah and gendered separation occurred in the 1950s, and constitutional reforms for equal rights, including political participation, were introduced in the 1960s. However, these reforms were later overturned during the 1980s and 1990s by Habibullah, the Mujahideen, and the Taliban.

During the first Taliban rule, an interpretation of Islamic Sharia law imposed by the Taliban resulted in a ban on female education, confining women to their homes. Violating these discriminatory laws led to harsh penalties and brutal punishments such as flogging and stoning to death for adultery. Rape and violence against women and girls became commonplace during this period (Women's Rights in Afghanistan, 2022). After the US intervention in Afghanistan, social injustice, totalitarian suppression, and apartheid against women and minorities remained considerably low, whereas equality, liberty, and democratic norms opened new opportunities for Afghan women (Nehan, 2022).

In post-US Afghanistan, well before the complete evacuation of the US forces, the Taliban's hold of Ghazni city on August 12, 2021, brought along new draconian laws and policies impinging on women's rights. Women's access to health, the right to education, and earned income were restricted, whereas freedom of movement, expression, and association was banned. Despite verbal assurances from the Taliban after assuming control of the government, instances of rights abuses have escalated. Furthermore, the worsening humanitarian crisis, characterized by lost income, price hikes, aid cutoffs, and cash shortages, has exacerbated the challenges faced by women. Women and girls are now denied their rights to education, work, movement, and assembly. Notably, women in sectors such as sports, media, and journalism are experiencing job losses. The operations of women's civil society organizations (CSOs) and female humanitarian staff, previously vocal advocates for women's rights, have been hindered.

The restriction of women's political participation was evident with the formation of an all-male cabinet in September 2021 (Barr, 2021). Similarly, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, tasked with securing women's legal rights, was replaced with the Ministry of Vice and Virtue, reminiscent of the previous Taliban government from 1996 to 2001. The new ministry has enforced arbitrary and severe restrictions and punishments for women and men, employing public beatings and imprisonment. On December 3, 2021, the Taliban government issued a special decree on women's rights based on Sharia, addressing aspects like consent in marriage, the rights of widows and their property share, and divorce rights (Ministry of Information and Culture,

Afghanistan, 2021). However, there is no mention of social rights, including education and employment.

The Taliban's Ministry of Virtue and Vice issued a decree on May 7, 2022, restricting women's freedom of movement. Women's freedom of association and the right to peaceful protests have also been curtailed. According to local and international sources, approximately 188 women were detained for political reasons between August 2021 and June 2022. These arrests were conducted unlawfully, with the Taliban using force by entering houses without arrest warrants. Torture has been employed as a terror tactic to suppress women advocating for their rights. For instance, detained women were subjected to stress positions, beatings with water hoses, electrocution, and constant threats against them and their families (International Commission of Jurists, 2023).

In an attempt to censor news related to women's ill-treatment, the Taliban has sought to restrict media reporting on women and ban local organizations advocating for women's rights. For example, on May 17, 2022, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission was dissolved, a body that had been an outspoken supporter of human rights violations and gender-based violence (Human Rights Watch, 2022a). Due to the persistent and egregious repressive measures by the Taliban against women continuing in 2023, Human Rights Watch (2023) has categorized the 'gender apartheid' and abuses against women and girls as 'crimes against humanity of persecution based on gender' that manifested as the restrictions on freedom of movement, expression, and association, employment, clothing choice, and education. In pertinence with the international response and concern towards the Taliban's severe and unlawful restrictions on women and girls' rights, Amnesty International, in its 2023 report: "The Taliban's War On Women The Crime Against Humanity Of Gender Persecution" has endorsed that Taliban's crackdown against women should be investigated by the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC and the UN Human Rights Council as the possible crimes under international law, including crime against humanity of gender persecution (International Commission of Jurists, 2023, p.2). According to the International Commission of Jurists (2023), ill-treatment based on imprisonment, enforced disappearance, and torture could be categorized as a crime against humanity of gender persecution under *Article 7(1)(h)* of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Rights of Ethnic and Religious Minorities

The ethnically diverse social composure of the Afghan society has made ethnic conflict an inevitable part of Afghanistan's political and socio-cultural history. Out of the 14 major ethnic groups recognized by the Afghan Constitution, Pashtuns form the largest ethnic group that has also been in control of the government for significant political history since the establishment of the Afghan state in the mid-eighteenth century. Along with the Pashtuns (38%), the Tajiks (25%), Hazaras (19%), and Uzbeks (6%) constitute almost 90% of the population (Riphenburg, 2005). Amongst the non-Pashtuns, Hazaras, due to their religious identity of Shi'ism, have faced lethal discrimination and genocidal persecution in the past. The 1998 Hazarajat war waged by the Taliban against the Hazaras caused human lives more than 6000. After capturing Kabul in 1996, the Taliban established a centralized and authoritarian regime based on a strict Sharia Law embedded in Wahhabi principles Filkins (2014).

With the resurgence of the Taliban, the number of attacks has been increased not only by the Taliban but also by the IS-K. In the first half of 2021, the United Nations

Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) documented 20 attacks targeting Hazaras, which left a total of 143 dead and 357 injured. Gannon (2022) tracks the record of the series of attacks on the minority group that started by the end of 2021 when the Taliban took hold of the government. In September-October 2021, Hazaras in Daykundi province were evicted from their homes by the Taliban fighters, thus causing 1,200 Hazaras to flee and displaced, while 13 were killed. On May 8, 2021, a suicide bombing of a high school killed 85 Hazara civilians, primarily schoolgirls, and wounded more than 240. In October 2021, at least 46 people were killed as a result of an ISIS-K attack on Shi'a Mosque in Kunduz province. After months of calm since the Taliban takeover of the government, in April 2022, the IS-K conducted the deadliest of three bombings in Mazar-e-Sharif, Kabul, and Kunduz, with about 40 killed and injured. Between August 2021 and early September 2022, Human Rights Watch reported at least the death of 700 Hazaras in 13 incidents that were carried out by the IS-K (Human Rights Watch, 2022b).

While the IS-K has been directly involved in the genocidal persecution against Hazaras, the Taliban, as the de facto authority, has instituted measures and policies that contribute to the marginalization and subjugation of the ethnic and religious minority groups. Along with pushing the Hazaras out of government and the security institutions, the Taliban has also been involved in extrajudicial killings, torture, and eviction of the group (along with *Kuchis*) from their lands and property. On the gravity of the ethnic killing of Hazaras, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum issued a press release in August 2021, warning that Hazaras face “a risk of crimes against humanity or even genocide.” (para.1) The United Nations special rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, on May 26, 2022, remarked that the systematic attacks against the Hazaras and minorities “reflect elements of an organizational policy, thus bearing hallmarks of crimes against humanity” (Human Rights Watch, 2022b, para 10).

Relevance of R2P: The Case of Afghanistan

While the general conception of R2P includes action by the sovereign state authority against the humanitarian crisis featuring mass atrocities, in the case of Afghanistan, the current humanitarian crisis is of a complex and multifaceted nature, including the post-war crisis, poverty, human security issues, human rights violations by the de facto Taliban regime which is by definition the incumbent sovereign government. When R2P was emerging as an international norm in the political and academic debates during the 2000s, Afghanistan was already undergoing a humanitarian crisis due to war. The crisis was a result of the Soviet occupation (1979), civil wars during various regimes, the 2001 US invasion, and the rise of the Taliban as an insurgent group and non-state actor.

The human security conditions during the US war in Afghanistan claimed more than 150,000 Afghan lives in 2019 (Watson Institute 2021). Though R2P was not invoked in the case of Afghanistan then, the atrocities by the state and non-state actors led to the protracted armed conflict. Balkan-Sahin (2022) has comprehensively assessed the role and responsibility of different Afghan governments within the theoretical assertions of *Pillar-I* and *Pillar-II* of R2P before the takeover of the Taliban regime in 2021. The key theme of this paper has been to study the renewed emergency of R2P in the very essence of its *Pillar-I* (state responsibility to protect populations from the scourge of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide) and *Pillar-II* in the post-US withdrawal.

In line with *Pillar-II* (the responsibility of the international community to assist States in protecting their populations) of R2P aimed at addressing the post-withdrawal humanitarian crisis, the international community- including states and international organizations and the UN organs-have been engaged in relief missions and assistance. The United Nations in Afghanistan, under its interim ‘Transitional Engagement Framework’ for 2022 and 2023, committed to collective action with partners in order to meet the needs of the Afghan population. With equal emphasis on the reinforcement of intervention along with the humanitarian efforts, the UN is more focused on sustainable solutions for Afghans (particularly the vulnerable groups, including women and girls) that include building resilience, supporting livelihoods, protecting human rights and freedoms, building social cohesion and social capital (United Nations Country Team in Afghanistan, 2023).

In terms of humanitarian assistance, the first initiative was taken by the World Food Program-led Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS). Soon, the air link to Kabul reopened on 12 September 2021, providing medical supplies on behalf of the World Health Organization. Pakistan became the first neighboring country connected via UNHAS with the major Afghan towns of Mazar-i-Sharif, Kandahar, and Herat on 29 August 2021 (First humanitarian flight, 2021). In March 2022, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, remarked that the country was experiencing ‘a very grave crisis’ and asked the international community to support Afghans. Between January and December 2022, humanitarian response reached 26.1 million Afghan people, whereas in 2023 (January-September), the humanitarian partners expanded relief assistance to 24.7 million people (Afghanistan: Humanitarian Response Plan, 2023). The aid included food and livelihood support, healthcare, water, sanitation, hygiene, nutrition assistance, protection assistance for children and women, education, and emergency shelter and household items.

On a collective level, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) convened a meeting initiated by Pakistan in December 2021. During this meeting, a Humanitarian Trust Fund and Food Security Programme were approved to address the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. Additionally, OIC foreign ministers urged the United States to unfreeze Afghanistan’s financial resources to aid in the country’s economic revival. Saudi Arabia also committed \$265 million in aid as part of a crisis relief program (Syed, 2021).

In tandem with humanitarian assistance, the UN, under Chapter Six of its Charter—Peaceful Settlement of Disputes, has the potential to play a role in establishing peace by facilitating negotiations among Afghan groups. Furthermore, the UN can engage regional states inclusively for regional security. Following the fall of Kabul, Security Council members called for an immediate cessation of violence in Afghanistan, the restoration of security and civil and constitutional order, and urgent talks to resolve the current crisis of authority in the country through an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned process of national reconciliation (Ponzio & Barakat, 2021).

Despite international relief efforts, 24.4 million people in Afghanistan still require humanitarian assistance. The country, already in a fragile state with a high poverty rate (over 9 in 10 people living in poverty), saw 12,795 Afghan refugees (97% from Pakistan) returning in 2023—more than three times the 3,717 individuals in 2022 (UNHCR RBAP Afghanistan Situation, 2023). In this precarious situation, the primary responsibility for delivering needs and protecting the rights of the Afghan people rests with the Taliban as the de facto authorities.

As emphasized by the United Nations Country Team (UNCT, 2023), addressing the grievances of the Afghan populace requires a change in policies and practices by the Taliban. The success of international humanitarian interventions depends on the regime ensuring the equitable delivery of services and creating a conducive environment by improving the rights and economic opportunities for women and girls. Constraints on these rights impede the economic and social recovery processes in Afghanistan. Consequently, this highlights the need for *Pillar-I* of the R2P. Regarding *Pillar-I*, Bellamy (2022) argues that it has tended to prove a stronger norm than the much popular *Pillar-III* (timely response to the atrocities by the international community).

The subjectivity of ‘responsibility’ and the nature of violations in *Pillar-I* are clearly defined compared to *Pillar-III*, where the responsibility and situational context are ambiguous and contested due to a lack of unanimity between the states. In the case of Afghanistan, the nature of violations and situational context (as discussed in the previous sections) are distinctly defined and fall under the definition of R2P’s *Pillar-I*. The currently catastrophic humanitarian crisis of Afghanistan and the widespread violation of human rights, thus, suffices the physical elements of the crimes against humanity, liable to *Pillar-I* applicability.

On the question of the ‘subjectivity’ of ‘who is responsible for preventing the population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity,’ *Pillar-I* simply uses the term ‘state’ as the responsible actor for the protection of its population. Though in practice, the governments are taken as the state and the sovereign authority to make policies and work for the well-being of the people, in the case of the Taliban (which is the incumbent de facto authority yet awaiting de jure recognition), calling it the sovereign authority may stir some controversy. This is on the pretext of how the Taliban has assumed power and that the government of the Taliban has not been ‘expressly’ recognized or yet gained de jure recognition by the international community since its formation in 2021.

While international law lacks any explicit provision on the recognition of the government that replaces the other through revolutionary means (in the form of civil wars) or because of contestation of power between the rival authorities, outside states are then to decide whether to recognize or not- the government in question (Lauterpacht, 1945). The choice of governmental recognition is often both political (backed by the national interest of the recognizing state) and based on the internal legitimacy of the government (to be recognized). Internal legitimacy is measured regarding effective control, service delivery, and stability (Nijat et al., 2023). Regarding the ‘effective control’ criterion, the Taliban swiftly expanded its influence, taking control of 26 out of Afghanistan’s 34 provincial capitals and quashing all resistance soon after seizing power (Haddad & Chughtai, 2021). Their authority remained unchallenged as then-President Ashraf Ghani and Vice President/Caretaker Leader Amrullah Saleh left the country.

Following the announcement and appointment of the new caretaker government in September 2021, the question of its recognition emerged. Recognition of the Taliban government has since been conditional on the protection of fundamental rights, particularly those of women and girls. The UN and other humanitarian organizations officially refer to the current Taliban regime as ‘De Facto Authorities (DFA).’

Given that the recognition of the Taliban hinges on the safeguarding of fundamental human rights, it underscores the relevance of R2P *Pillar-I* to the ongoing

humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. This recognition highlights the potential applicability of the R2P in theory and practice by the Taliban regime.

Therefore, as the de facto sovereign authority, the Taliban government has a responsibility to protect the Afghan population, especially women and religious minorities, not only against self-perpetrated crimes against humanity such as rape, torture, beating, and killing but also against inhumane terrorist attacks by IS-K. Addressing current human rights violations by the Taliban government could eventually lead to de jure recognition, enhancing its political legitimacy and strength. Embedding normative human rights laws in Afghanistan's institutional infrastructure might enable the Taliban to seek international assistance for the country's economic revival, aligning with *Pillar-II* of the R2P.

Furthermore, preventing atrocities aligns with the primary responsibility to protect, serving as a means to reinforce state sovereignty against intrusive international intervention. As underscored by United Nations Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon, "the principle of the Responsibility to Protect is designed to be an ally of sovereignty, rather than to undermine it." (United Nations, 2014, p.2). Preventing atrocity crimes within state borders allows states to fulfill their sovereign responsibilities and resist unwarranted intervention by international actors (United Nations, 2014).

Conclusion

The ever-changing dynamics of global politics lead to a transformation in the norms, customs, and laws of the community of nations. Consequently, studying these aspects in academic discourse requires an eclectic approach rather than a restrictive one.

The concept of R2P originated as an idea and subsequently evolved into an international norm governing states' interaction. At its core, R2P emphasizes the concept of 'peace from within.' This means that state authorities should either embrace peace as sovereign entities or be realized by the international community through diplomatic and peaceful means of state conduct. The military option of humanitarian intervention itself is a contested notion that may be politicized and misused by the powerful states. R2P, with the coercive tools of diplomacy, may work in crises against the obstinate authorities within the states to maintain peace and preserve human rights. The current humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan needs an all-inclusive, internalized, and institutionalized approach toward the goal of stability, peace, and prosperity, for which the first two pillars of R2P can significantly play their part in crisis mitigation. Unlike *Pillar-III*, which implores applicability in response to the humanitarian crisis, the first two pillars of R2P may necessitate the need to prevent the further spoils of a persisting humanitarian crisis and the future violation of fundamental human rights. In the case of Afghanistan, the *Pillar-I* and *Pillar-II* of R2P as a crisis management tool, if effectively invoked, can potentially help the de facto Taliban government address many issues relating to political governance, economic stability, and human security by incentivizing the sovereign legitimacy and recognition of the regime in future.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

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The Bilateral Engagement of India and Pakistan at Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Prospects and Challenges

NUST Journal of International Peace & Stability
2024, Vol. 7(1) Pages 20-33



njips.nust.edu.pk

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.37540/njips.v7i1.161>

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Abstract

This article examines the complex relationship of Pakistan and India in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). It points out cooperation pathways through steady advances in economic and security sectors. New Delhi and Islamabad have entered a puzzling state of affairs where both work for regional cooperation with serious bilateral frictions. In this context, the emphasis lies in highlighting the SCO as a favored platform for mitigating the rift between India and Pakistan, following thorough assessments of various alternatives. The argument is developed on the conjecture that establishing cooperation between rival states sometimes seems impossible, yet governments could enter into cooperative relations and collaborate through institutions. The central research question revolves around understanding how the SCO alleviates tensions between Pakistan and India. It is discerned that the SCO's gradual advances toward regional integration hold the potential to facilitate collaboration among member states. The study examines various instances wherein India assumes responsible roles within the SCO, agreeing to take concerted actions for regional security and stability alongside other partners, including Pakistan.

Keywords

India, Pakistan, Central Asia, SCO, Cooperation

Introduction

This article aims to study the signs of reduced tension between Pakistan and India after their full membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The primary

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Received 25 March 2023; Revised 07 August 2023; Accepted 12 December 2023; Published online 13 December 2023

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purpose of forming SCO was to enhance regional security and foster economic stability. The essence of the SCO is rooted in the Shanghai Five, founded in 1996 to promote cooperation and understanding among its member countries (Fredholm, 2013).

Primarily, China sought to alleviate tensions with newly independent neighboring countries, namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Russia, aspiring to cultivate amicable borders with all. After the inclusion of Uzbekistan in the grouping in 2001 (Jaffer, 2016), the organization sought to deepen the military trust by reducing the military forces on the borders to maintain the mutual trust between the five (member) states and to prevent security threats (Aris, 2013). Subsequently, it was expected by member states that SCO would act as a valuable platform for engaging the hostile states of Central and South Asia.

It has been argued that the rivalry between Pakistan and India challenges the SCO. Some scholars note an escalation in the region's stability predicament due to unpleasant incidents in 2018 and 2019, such as the Pulwama attack intensifying conflict on the Line of Control (LoC). Moreover, Pakistani concerns voiced at the SCO regarding Indian actions in Kashmir, including the revocation of *Articles 370 and 35A* and the enactment of the controversial Citizenship Act, have further exacerbated the situation (Adil, 2023; Varma, 2017). The rift extends beyond India and Pakistan as a group of Muslim countries within SCO faces a sectarian schism (Khan, 2008). Consequently, some intellectuals and practitioners foresee an inevitable clash of interests among states within the SCO.

However, there is a lack of scholarly work on de-escalating tension among SCO members. Most scholars have predominantly focused on depicting the SCO as an anti-West organization (Bryant, 2013) or a military alliance prepared against the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). There has always been a traditional viewpoint presented about Pakistan and India that their perennial conflict cannot be resolved by any means. However, this article takes a novel approach by examining the role of SCO in de-escalating tensions between the two nations. Although SCO has not facilitated military disengagement between India and Pakistan, it has significantly managed friction between the two states. As the SCO evolves into a dialogue-oriented cooperative forum, its success in de-escalating tensions among Central Asian states suggests the possibility of a similar outcome for the South Asian states.

Many scholars have already accepted that states doing business with each other have a diminished likelihood of conflict. Shaheen Rafi Khan and his associates argued that improved economic and political relations in an interdependent marketplace could advance peace-building efforts between states (Khan et al., 2009). Therefore, the SCO, exemplifying economic interdependence, not only serves to prevent conflicts between member states but also safeguards the economic interests of nations, including India and Pakistan, through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

After a prolonged wait, a recent publication has surfaced, asserting the SCO's role in de-escalating tensions among its members. MacHaffie (2023), in this work, delves into the SCO's potential for conflict de-escalation and trust-building among its rival members. However, it is worth noting that the author primarily emphasized the mutual tensions among Central Asian states.

Certain scholars maintained that the India-Pakistan rivalry would have limited detrimental effects on the SCO. Their argument is rooted in the leadership of Russia and China within the SCO, both committed to rooting out the Western world order in the region (Ahmed et al., 2019). Consequently, the SCO provides avenues for

collaboration in the realm of security, potentially yielding a positive impact on Indo-Pak relations. Rehman and Faisal (2015) anticipate resolving the conflict between India and Pakistan through a multilateral forum, heralding a new era of security and economic cooperation in South Asia.

Several studies have undertaken a comparative analysis of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the SCO. The primary cause attributed to the failure of SAARC is the inherent distrust between India and Pakistan. This distrust has made it challenging for states to place confidence in any regional organization that claims to foster stability and cooperation between the two countries. The SAARC charter repeatedly used the terms 'peace,' 'non-interference,' 'territorial integrity,' and 'non-use of force' (Mitra, 2014) but could not bring states on the converging points for mutual understanding. This has led scholars to view regional organizations skeptically regarding reducing the rivalry between India and Pakistan. In contrast, the case of the SCO is distinct, primarily due to the involvement of China. The presence of China introduces a dynamic that sets the SCO apart from the SAARC. However, it is essential to note that success for the SCO requires diplomatic acumen in handling the deeply rooted mistrust between member states, as highlighted by Singh and Singh (2021).

In this diverse background, this article endeavors to find the functional role of the SCO in fostering collaboration between the two rival states through potential areas of cooperation. Much of the existing literature has overlooked the various dimensions of rivalries within the SCO, with limited scholarly attention devoted to understanding how the organization manages interactions between Pakistan and India. The central inquiry revolves around how the SCO reduces mutual tension between Pakistan and India.

To ensure an objective analysis, this research employs an interpretive approach, interpreting qualitative data through the development of conceptual categories. Most data was sourced from various textual materials, including books, articles, newspapers, and official websites. Thorough scrutiny of speeches by key politicians from Pakistan and India provided insights into the evolving dynamics within the SCO. To comprehend the states' intentions, we relied on local sources with notable references, including Dawn newspaper and the Journal of Central Asia and Regional Studies in Pakistan. Similarly, significant Indian sources, such as the 'Institute of Chinese Studies-Delhi' and 'The New Indian Express,' were consulted. Independent sources like 'The Astana Times,' 'Al Jazeera,' and the 'Council on Foreign Relations' were also referenced for diverse perspectives. Furthermore, official websites, including the Ministry of External Affairs: Government of India and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, were consulted to facilitate an impartial and objective analysis.

This article is structured into three sections. The initial section delineates the perspective of institutional liberalism, examining the inclination of states towards cooperation. The second section highlights the paradoxical situation that arose after India and Pakistan were included in the SCO. Lastly, the third section elaborates on the potential for diminished hostility between India and Pakistan, exploring avenues of collaboration in the security and economic domains facilitated by the SCO.

Conceptual Framework

Cooperating can bring returns for India and Pakistan, primarily through trade and investment. In this regard, institutional arrangements appear to be the most appropriate

approach for states' cooperation and the economy's betterment. Not much has been studied about this in the case of India and Pakistan. The SCO has pioneered a novel approach to multilateral cooperation, effectively addressing the fundamental interests of its members. With over two decades of practical implementation, the SCO has introduced a cooperative path that aligns with the contemporary trend and meets the region's needs.

Institutional liberalism (as a school of thought) suggests that shifting from a chaotic to a peaceful world is possible. International institutes enhance the cooperation among states by providing them with opportunities to negotiate. Robert Keohane emphasized that organizations mediate between states to uphold trust and lessen their differences. In this context, SCO appears as a platform providing continuity and stability. Moreover, the organization also impacts members' and observers' behavior in formulating policies and agreements. Organizations usually observe the security competition between rival states to foster cooperation for stability. International organizations share security information with countries to reduce potential threats (Keohane, 2012). Additionally, increasing economic interdependence poses challenges for participants as well. Unlike conventional hostilities, states now compete for economic benefits, prioritizing the growth and prosperity of their respective nations. Keohane contends that cooperation is inevitable when states share mutual interests (Keohane, 1984). Consequently, business collaborations involving groups of different states necessitate cooperation between business lobbies and states. The increasing collaboration and mutual trust among states can enhance human values, fostering policy coordination and confidence among governments, ultimately benefiting the pursuit of common interests.

The abovementioned canon is needed in a region prone to separatism and extremism to mitigate inter-state mistrust. Unlike many other organizations, the SCO operates with a degree of secrecy but has proven effective in promoting the economic development and assistance of the region. The SCO may seem like a complex assembly of nations with conflicting views on various issues, but its members come together to boost trade and enhance security. There is a growing trend of innovative cooperation among distant partners; for instance, Kazakhstan is increasing collaboration with India in the mining industry while simultaneously engaging in light industry partnerships with Pakistan (Assaniyaz, 2022). In general, members provide potential assistance to weaker members, such as the collective support for Afghanistan. In light of this, most recently, in the SCO summit held on September 15-16, 2022, Uzbekistan proposed launching an assistance fund for Afghanistan to support its upliftment and development (Imamove, 2022).

Despite the friction between states, the organizational potential is sufficient to enhance the likelihood of cooperation by acknowledging common interests. In this vein, India has assumed a more responsible role after taking up the rotating position as the head of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), where it actively seeks collaboration with partner states.

The prospect of improved relations between India and Pakistan is also plausible through joint military exercises in which both states participate, fostering mutual trust. The SCO encourages cooperation by assigning distinct roles; for example, India's presidency of the SCO for 2023 highlights its proactive role. This is further underscored by the speech of the Indian Prime Minister, who signals the potential for increased economic activities in South and Central Asia ("India assumes Presidency of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," 2022). Hence, cooperation driven by

economic interests will become imperative for SCO members, achievable through strengthening mutual trust. Thus, the rivalry conundrum finds a solution within the SCO framework, where a shift in perceptions is attainable through frequent interactions.

Emerging Regional Scenarios

Upon becoming permanent members of the SCO, Pakistan and India have entered a new epoch in history, inaugurating a fresh phase of regionalism. Through this, India and Pakistan, along with Central Asian states, are to get access to new markets, cultures, increased capital flow, and new skills. Regional cooperation serves as an apparatus, highlighting the importance of individual states, with each member being a building block of regional-level integration. The evolving regional dynamics in South and Central Asia have paved the way for collaborative actions in economic activities and countermeasures against rising extremists.

Pakistan and India hold central importance in the South Asian region due to their possession of nuclear weapons. Therefore, their inclusion in the SCO reflects the compelling influence of the organization. This inclusion compels their leaders to convene to discuss regional issues and establish a connection between South and Central Asia. Additionally, it introduces a new line of thinking for collaborative efforts to remedy the Afghanistan situation. In a geographical sense, Afghanistan serves as a bridge connecting two regions, namely Central Asia and South Asia. The turbulence within the country also has implications for the states in its vicinity.

In 2021, the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan created a power vacuum that not only stirred unrest within Afghanistan but also had repercussions for neighboring states. The current turbulence is of paramount concern to both China and Russia. Beijing has made substantial investments in Afghanistan's infrastructure, while Russia is particularly alarmed by the presence of Daesh (ISIS) in Afghanistan (Rab & Zhilong, 2018). The success of China's Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) and Russian-led economic integration projects hinges on mitigating security problems in Afghanistan (Piekos & Elizabeth, 2015). Stakeholders are actively seeking solutions to address the security situation in Afghanistan, particularly in South and Central Asia. To this end, an institutional approach has been adopted again, with member countries intensifying collaborative efforts for security. The members of the SCO have embraced the 'Program of Terrorism, Extremism, and Separatism for 2019-2021,' assigning a pivotal role to the RATS of the SCO in addressing security threats through the exchange of information—a testament to mutual collaboration, irrespective of the severity of their bilateral issues.

Indeed, India's influence in regional affairs has grown as it undertakes new roles assigned by the organization. Reflecting on the past objectives and goals of the SCO, the members established the 'SCO Development Strategy until 2025,' encompassing areas such as politics, security, and economics. This indicates that Pakistan and India discuss various regional and international issues, Afghanistan's unstable political environment, economic development, countering security risks, and other cooperative areas like tourism, sports, culture, and trade. What remains are their bilateral issues, to be resolved amicably, which fall outside the jurisdiction of the organization. However, the working mechanism of the SCO is convincing both India and Pakistan to move in the same direction. The SCO provides a platform for its members to engage in repetitive routines, forming the foundation for steady trust-

building (MacHaffie, 2023). In this context, considerable room is available for economic and trade cooperation between India and Pakistan.

With India's position gaining influence, especially after the dramatic return of the Taliban in Afghanistan and securing the role of chair in the SCO, it has been closely monitoring regional security issues. India assumed the chairmanship of RATS in October 2021 and has since shown interest in establishing regional peace. However, it has not extended any conciliation offer to Pakistan, signaling a halt in making meaningful progress on the SCO's cooperation and regional integration agenda.

Nevertheless, its reiterated commitment to collaborate for regional peace and frequent official meetings with Pakistani representatives under the SCO has a discreet role in reducing tension. Similarly, there was a divide between Pakistan and India over their interaction with the Afghan Taliban. Now, the SCO has taken the lead in negotiating with the current government in Kabul and establishing working links with the locals of Afghanistan. The balancing act has become one of the discernible qualities of the SCO, which both India and Pakistan are observing.

Similar to India and Pakistan, the Central Asian Republics (CARs) also rely on the SCO for their security, especially with the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan impacting their security structure. In this scenario, collaboration between Pakistan, China, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, and India becomes crucial for sharing intelligence. Moreover, Pakistan has extended its sea route to Central Asian states and Afghanistan, earning it the status of a bridge in South Asia. While India has expressed displeasure over the Chinese-led BRI and the CPEC, Pakistan remains composed, recognizing this as more of a concern for China. The SCO is establishing a Sino-centric order in South and Central Asia, where Islamabad and New Delhi, among others, are involved. Under the auspices of the SCO, both Pakistan and India have expressed their views on regional problems, mutual security threats, and eagerness to work for economic advancement (Kaushik & Rajesh, 2023).

The Influence of SCO on Pakistan and India

There are two opinions regarding the extension of the SCO, namely optimistic and pessimistic (Kupriyanov, 2020). The optimistic viewpoint suggests that including these two states in the SCO aims to resolve the ongoing contention between the two South Asian countries and address regional security lapses. This perspective argues that without the involvement of Islamabad and New Delhi, other members, particularly China and Russia, would struggle to maintain stability in Eurasia. On the other hand, the pessimistic perspective envisions this inclusion as detrimental to the organization's image, potentially hindering its advancement. It has been nearly six years since India and Pakistan became full members of the SCO, and relations between the two have been deteriorating with each passing day. Despite these challenges, the organization continues to thrive, rejecting both pessimistic and optimistic propositions.

Unequivocally, relations between India and Pakistan have been strained since their independence. Nevertheless, Islamabad and New Delhi's accession to the SCO expanded the geographical influence of the organization and strengthened its economic base. However, their accord also resulted in contradictory approaches to global issues (Raghavan, 2022). The admission of Pakistan and India to the SCO has led them on a peculiar path of association where, despite being bilateral antagonists, they are bound to work together for regional stability. The intensity of the conflict has fluctuated with different courses of action, leading Islamabad to decrease diplomatic connections with

New Delhi in 2019, particularly in response to the Indian government's revocation of the autonomous status of Indian-Held Jammu and Kashmir (IHJ&K).

Nevertheless, India is also obligated to work under the set rules of SCO. A former Indian diplomat, P.S Raghavan, maintains that "SCO facilitates India-Central Asia interactions and enhances opportunities for monitoring the internal and external influences there, promoting economic connections and deterring hostile activities against Indian interests" (Raghavan, 2022, para.12). However, for some, it is perplexing that New Delhi would operate on terms set by Beijing. For this reason, the engagement between India and Pakistan at the SCO summit on September 15-16, 2022, followed by a virtual interaction in 2023, has garnered global attention—especially in the aftermath of a series of clashes between the two. The dialogue that seemed to have halted is now being renewed, as they are obliged to cooperate on specific terms within the SCO despite not engaging in bilateral discussions.

The SCO establishes rules for its members to share intelligence with RATS to address security-related issues. Bilaterally, India and Pakistan accuse each other of involvement in Kashmir and Baluchistan (Siddiqi, 2018), making cooperation challenging. Given that the forces of India and Pakistan are engaged in strikes on the Line of Control (LOC) against each other, effective intelligence sharing becomes difficult (Haidari, 2019). Nevertheless, their intelligence agencies must share data, potentially reducing discontent between the two South Asian giants. Hence, the SCO has positively engaged the two rival states, fostering discreet trust.

The Areas of Cooperation

Since its inception, the SCO has been pivotal in fostering collaboration for regional stability. It has actively promoted practical cooperation across various fields, including military, economic, and political domains, among its member states, as explained in the forthcoming section. Currently, the SCO is expanding its areas of cooperation to multi-level and multi-field dimensions. The organization prioritizes addressing boundary issues and consolidating political mutual trust and good neighborliness among its member states (Hao, 2021). The SCO's objectives bear some resemblance to the U.S. war against terrorism, as its unambiguous and compelling goal has facilitated trust and cooperation among states, uniting them against the common challenges of extremism, terrorism, and separatism. Through its agenda, the SCO maintains strong links between countries, fostering a collaborative spirit as a relatively comfortable means to achieve shared goals.

Military Cooperation

To combat extremism, separatism, and terrorism in the region, military cooperation and intelligence sharing are deemed mandatory, for which both India and Pakistan align themselves with the agenda of the SCO. The organization orchestrates joint military exercises with its member countries to enhance mutual trust. Prior to the admission of India and Pakistan, the SCO had a history of conducting several Peace Mission operations in 2005, 2007, 2009, and 2010, aiming to reduce terrorist threats in the Central and South Asian regions (Hashmi, 2015). Interestingly, participation in the military exercises organized by the SCO at different times is mandatory for all member countries to promote mutual trust and maintain a congenial environment. Notably, the anti-terrorist military exercises held in 2018 marked the first joint participation of Pakistan and India ("Indian, Pakistani Troops," 2018). Subsequently, in 2021, another 'Peace Mission' was scheduled in Russia (Xinhua, 2021), with active participation from

all member states. The frequent interactions between the two rival states under the provided security platform demonstrate the success of the SCO.M

Similarly, the RATS of the SCO, established in 2004, monitors cross-border illegal and terrorist activities among its member states. Amidst all the challenges, terrorism has emerged as the most significant phenomenon that cannot be effectively addressed without the cooperation of countries (Azhar & Muhammad, 2018).

RATS-SCO examines all the terrorist information shared by the member states to control illegal activities. During India's chairmanship of RATS in the year 2021-2022, it hosted a meeting on Afghanistan in November 2021 that was attended by Pakistan ("India hosts SCO-RATS meet," 2022). However, their intelligence data-sharing reports were made public to address regional security problems. Some reports emerged from the 22nd meeting of the Council of Heads at Samarkand in 2022, indicating that all SCO countries agreed to prepare a consolidated list of terrorist entities in their respective countries (Haidar, 2022). These instances testify that the SCO's provided security framework functions for regional security and connecting states, regardless of their existing tensions.

Economic Cooperation

Economic cooperation is the key to fostering peaceful relations between states, as their economic interests influence their foreign policy behaviors. Liberal institutionalism emphasizes the potential for cooperation between states, where mutual trust becomes indispensable due to their commercial ties. This framework envisions the future of India-Pakistan relations and suggests that the reduction of hostility is likely through increased economic dependence. New Delhi and Islamabad aim to secure energy resources from the nearest region, namely Central Asia, which is rich in various natural resources. Moreover, India's industries are seeking cost-effective resources, and Pakistan's economic growth hinges on access to energy resources. Hence, common interests strongly influence their foreign policy behaviors and bind them together.

In this context, the CPEC emerges as a potential avenue for economic development, benefitting Pakistan and offering opportunities for Central Asian countries seeking open markets. However, India has expressed reservations about joining CPEC, citing concerns that the project passes through disputed territory in Kashmir. This reflects India's apprehensions about a growing partnership between Pakistan and China in the region. Despite these concerns, the trade interdependence between India and China, valued at 70 billion US dollars, indicates a pragmatic approach to cooperation ("India PM Narendra Modi to Visit China," 2015).

Moreover, in 2015, the Indian Prime Minister's visit to China, shortly after the announcement of CPEC, resulted in the signing of agreements encompassing infrastructure development such as railways and roads, scientific research and development, and education ("India and China Sign Deals," 2015). This highlights the nuanced dynamics where India, while hesitant about specific regional integration projects led by China, actively engages in trade deals and infrastructure collaborations with its Asian neighbor.

Indeed, India's upcoming role as the rotating chair of the SCO could significantly shape its perspective on the CPEC. As the chair, India will have a heightened responsibility within the SCO, providing a platform to engage with regional issues and foster collaboration among member states. This leadership position might encourage India to adopt a more nuanced and cooperative approach, considering the economic and strategic implications of projects like CPEC within the broader regional

context. Focusing on promoting stability and cooperation, the SCO may serve as a forum for India to address concerns, find common ground, and explore constructive engagement with China and Pakistan on matters of shared interest and mutual benefit.

Additionally, the Business Council of the SCO plays a crucial role in advancing the organization's development strategy for 2025, focusing on supporting businesses and facilitating trade. Between 2017 and 2021, the SCO's Business Council expanded its activities to enhance cooperation, regional trade, and investments among member states. Notably, foreign trade within the SCO has experienced consistent growth, reaching a volume of 6.6 trillion US dollars in 2021, marking a significant increase compared to the levels over twenty years ago (Hao, 2021). This steady rise in foreign trade is poised to bolster the implementation of economic projects for practical development among member countries and pave the way for establishing new agreements.

Regional Integration

Regional integration has become an integral component of the foreign policy for Central and South Asian states in the 21st century due to their geographical proximity to China and the escalating complexity of geo-economic issues. Chinese leaders reiterated this emphasis on regional integration and cooperation during the meeting of the Council of Heads of States (CHS) of the SCO held in 2022 ("Ride on the Trend of the Times," 2022). The two regions share a common history, ideology, culture, and security, establishing strong links between them (Azhar & Muhammad, 2018). The SCO members actively pursue the promotion of regional integration projects bilaterally and directly through the organization's platform. For instance, economic exchanges among SCO members exhibited remarkable resilience during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic ("Expanding SCO can boost regional integration," 2021) when the international economy was experiencing a downturn.

The SCO actively promotes the BRI and other regional connectivity projects, including initiating a rail link between Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan. The BRI injects new momentum into infrastructure development, people-to-people connections, road and rail construction, and trade exchanges. There are plans for the Trans-Afghan railway line to run from Termiz in Uzbekistan to Mazar-e Sharif, Kabul, and Jalalabad and eventually cross the border to Peshawar in Pakistan ("Afghanistan and Uzbekistan draw roadmap," 2022).

Given India's bilateral interactions with Central Asian states, it cannot overlook Pakistan's engagements with these nations. Additionally, implementing other energy projects such as the South Asia and Central Asia (CASA 1000) and the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline (TAPI) adds to the regional collaboration. Moreover, there are potential areas for Pakistan and India to initiate new economic projects at the regional level.

The fundamental concept behind establishing the SCO was to foster collaboration among member states, reshape their approach to security challenges, and promote economic and political cooperation. This objective is substantiated by the substantial increase in investments among SCO members. The expansion of the organization further attests to its growth and popularity. The proceedings of specific meetings of the Council of Heads of States (CHS) of the SCO in 2022 garnered widespread attention, as the new agenda of the SCO includes enhancing the well-being of its people and maintaining the connectivity of member states to world markets (Dadabaev, 2022).

Indeed, the SCO offers opportunities for India and Pakistan to engage with Central Asian states and extend their influence in the region. Given India's lack of direct geographical access to Central Asia, Chinese initiatives in regional connectivity provide India with a means to connect with the Central Asian Republics (CARs). India has also been emphasizing regional connectivity, aligning somewhat with Chinese ideals.

Evolving Complexities

It is clear that India and Pakistan have struggled to maintain positive relations, and the intensity of their interactions often hinges on geopolitical issues. The longstanding dispute over Kashmir, dating back to their independence, has been a persistent source of tension. Despite signing 44 peace agreements to thaw their frosty relationship, progress has been minimal. The situation escalated further when both countries joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in 2017.

In less than two years of becoming a permanent member of the SCO, India made a significant move by revoking *Article 370* of its constitution, effectively dividing Jammu and Kashmir into two separate regions. This decision sparked a vehement response from Pakistan, exacerbating hostilities (Shah & Shah, 2020). Adding fuel to the fire, India imposed a lockdown in Jammu and Kashmir and deployed military forces in the region (Zia, 2021). This move has raised concerns that the actions of the BJP-led Indian government are not only threatening the well-being of the Kashmiri people but also jeopardizing regional stability (Alvi, 2021).

Pakistan strongly asserted that India's revocation of *Article 370* amounted to a blatant violation of bilateral agreements and international resolutions. In response, Pakistan unveiled a new political map incorporating Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) as part of its territory. India, however, dismissed Pakistan's move as an unlawful act devoid of legal validity, both nationally and internationally ("Pakistan affirms claim to IJK," 2020). The consequences of this exchange were dire for the South Asian region, further complicating an already intricate situation.

The tensions eventually reached a turning point when, in February 2021, New Delhi and Islamabad agreed to a ceasefire. While this might be considered a small step, it holds significant meaning for both sides as they navigate the path toward peace.

Moreover, the involvement of extra-regional powers has exacerbated tensions between India and Pakistan, reshaping the dynamics of the entire region. The Indo-US alliance and the evolving relationships between China, Russia, and Pakistan have significantly influenced regional power politics. Notably, Chinese investments in the BRI and the CPEC projects in Pakistan have raised concerns for India and the United States. The expanding Chinese influence has also fostered a closer relationship between Moscow and Islamabad, leading to collaboration in the energy and defense sectors. This shifting geopolitical landscape adds another layer of complexity to an already intricate situation in the region.

The SCO serves as a crucial multilateral forum, bringing representatives of India and Pakistan together on numerous occasions. However, despite these opportunities, the domestic pressures faced by political leaders in both states have made them hesitant to display alignment towards each other overtly. Both nations actively seek engagement in the Eurasian region and are signatories to various security projects. There is potential for collaboration in regional initiatives, such as electricity trade projects, which could provide a common platform for interaction based on shared interests.

Furthermore, the involvement of China, Russia, and other Central Asian states—associates of both India and Pakistan—in these initiatives could play a constructive role in easing tensions. Collective participation in regional projects may offer a diplomatic avenue for fostering dialogue and cooperation between the two nations.

Despite the ongoing challenges, there is an opportunity for both states to initiate trust-building measures through small, incremental steps. Exploring cooperation in diverse areas such as telecommunication, agriculture, fostering people-to-people contacts, education, health, sports, and culture could pave the way for mutual understanding. Building trust through collaboration in various sectors and fostering open communication on essential security-related matters remains the most viable option for achieving lasting peace between the two rival states.

Conclusion

The SCO emerges as an effective organization, fostering member-state cohesion, promoting regional stability, and mitigating tensions through dialogues. The organization advocates the development of economic corridors, facilitating connectivity between inaccessible and developed areas. Its focus on the cooperation of states aims to enhance security in the Central and South Asian region. While the SCO does not directly intervene in state disagreements, its operational mechanisms compel member states to convene, fostering the sharing of crucial intelligence data for regional security. Consequently, several Central Asian states (members of SCO), once entangled in various issues, now collaborate. Though characterized by longstanding and complex tensions, the India-Pakistan case is viewed as atypical. However, the operational dynamics of the SCO are believed to contribute to easing tensions between the two nations.

Undoubtedly, the exchange of surgical strikes signaled a heightened risk of a full-scale war between India and Pakistan, which was fortunately halted. Concurrently, the SCO continued its expansion, playing a vital role in completing numerous projects related to geographical connectivity. The organization has also assigned responsibilities to its members to combat terrorism, extremism, and separatism in South and Central Asia. In this context, the RATS-SCO has trained and equipped its members to counteract terrorism effectively. India's appointment as the chairman of RATS for one year facilitated cooperation among member states, including Pakistan.

Currently holding the rotating presidency of the SCO, India's congenial role as the host state suggests the potential for reduced tensions. Frequent interactions between the armed forces of the two states during peace mission exercises have already become common. Additionally, meetings of political leaders and interactive delegations make a positive impression on each other. The SCO's noteworthy initiatives for economic exchanges among member states contribute significantly to fortifying mutual trust, thereby promoting regional stability.

While the dialogue on terrorism-related issues appears to have stalled interactions between Islamabad and New Delhi, the limited sharing of intelligence data has proven helpful in building confidence and reducing differences. In addition, the promotion of regional integration and economic connections between South and Central Asia is aligning the interests of both nations. Recognizing mutual trust between India and Pakistan is pivotal; minor steps for collaboration would make considerable contributions towards regional integration. In essence, the pragmatic cooperation between the two countries is feasible under the framework of the SCO.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

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Populism in India Under Modi Regime and its Implications for Pakistan

NUST Journal of International Peace & Stability
2024, Vol. 7(1) Pages 34-50



njips.nust.edu.pk

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.37540/njips.v7i1.160>

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Abstract

This research assesses the rise of populist politics in India under the Modi regime and illustrates its implications for Pakistan. It studies the interaction between Hindutva politics, different mechanisms of populism, the emergence of illiberal democracy in India, and how it impacts India's domestic and foreign policies. The key findings of this paper focus on how Modi established himself as a populist leader and how populism in India has affected its relationship with the neighboring state of Pakistan. Based on qualitative research, this paper provides analytical input to conceptualize right-wing populism as a violent phenomenon that will have a far-reaching impact on Pakistan's National Security. Following Modi's win in 2018, he started working towards creating a majoritarian identity. To facilitate and further construct this narrative, Prime Minister Modi's government started making policies such as revoking *Article 370* in 2019, introducing the Citizenship Amendment Bill (2019), and implementing the National Register of Citizens to help mobilize the masses. This has resulted in right-wing populism being synonymous with Indian politics under the Modi regime. The populist Modi regime used anti-Pakistan rhetoric to attract voters and attain majoritarian rule in India. Examining the populist threats and challenges emanating from Modi's Hindutva government has become a focal point for scholars to comprehend the contemporary political landscape of the region.

Keywords

Pakistan, Populism, India, Modi, National Security

Introduction

In academia, scholars have offered a range of definitions to explain the complex character of populism. Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017) define populism as an anti-

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Received 05 March 2023; Revised 08 August 2023; Accepted 17 November 2023; Published online 12 January 2024

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secular ideology and see it as a radical movement of those who challenge the state's development with their right-wing agendas. Krieger and Zimmermann (2018) define populism as a united approach to international law. Populism has a far-reaching impact on the relationship between the state, institutions, and global governance. While populism in India penetrated rigidly with the success of Narendra Modi becoming Prime Minister, as a phenomenon, it can be understood by analyzing the policies and the politics of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Narendra Modi during his terms as the Prime Minister.

On the international stage, India significantly invested in Iran and Afghanistan, primarily to safeguard regional interests and curb Pakistan's influence. Moreover, India has also been funding terrorism and anti-state ethnic movements in Pakistan, as proven by the RSS Dossier presented to the media houses by former Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi ("Pakistan unveils dossier," 2021). He claimed that India, through its state-sponsored terrorism, is backing Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), and Jamaat-Al-Ahrar. The post-Pulwama Attack incidents, involving the targeting of minorities, clerics, political figures, and civilians, along with threats to Pakistan's sovereignty, exemplify Modi's strategy for destabilizing Pakistan's security and regional peace. Modi's pro-Hindutva stance has not only allowed him to garner public support but also establish a united Hindu populist front (Kaltwasser et al., 2017).

Populism directly influences foreign policy, shaping the stability or instability of bilateral relations between populist states and others. It is often said to be the defining factor of the politics of the 21st Century (Varshney, 2021). In South Asia, it is seen as a form of right-wing politics led by a charismatic leader who unites and mobilizes the people to maximize their power. Populism in South Asia, particularly in India, challenges democratic principles and values (Joshi, 2020). The surge in populism in India can be attributed to its economically and politically limited integration with neighboring states. India has pursued ultra-nationalist policies that primarily benefit the Hindu elite in the region and their respective states (Dawn, 2021).

This increasing populism could potentially exacerbate issues for neighboring states, particularly Pakistan, which grapples with a fragile political and economic system, widespread poverty, and ethnic movements with anti-state sentiments, sometimes exploited by India to its advantage (Sandel, 2018). This paper employs a qualitative research methodology, drawing from a comprehensive array of both primary and secondary sources, to thoroughly investigate the surge of populism in India over the past decade. The primary sources encompass official documents, speeches, and statements from the Modi regime, providing an insightful lens into the policymaking process.

In tandem with primary sources, an extensive review of secondary sources, including academic works, think-tank analyses, and media reports, enriches the research with a broader contextual backdrop. This combination ensures a robust foundation for examining the policies enacted by the Modi government that have contributed to the rise of populism in India. The main focus of the research is the rise of populism in India in the last decade. The study analyzes the policies of the Modi regime responsible for this upsurge and how the intensification of populism in India has affected Pakistan, especially its security. Throughout the paper, the theory of populism is used to assess the formation of India's domestic and foreign policies and how these have direct implications for Pakistan (Kaul & Vajpeyi, 2020).

Within the framework of this theoretical perspective, this research aims to elucidate the underlying mechanisms that establish a connection between populism and policy decisions. The goal is to offer a comprehensive understanding of the direct implications of these policies, both for Pakistan and the broader geopolitical landscape.

This paper has formulated several pivotal questions to address the following. Firstly, the objective is to assess the extent of the BJP's success in utilizing Hindutva ideology as a tool of populism to secure and consolidate political power in India. Additionally, the research will investigate the implications of foreign policy stemming from this upsurge in populism. Secondly, we seek to identify the policies implemented by the Modi regime that have significantly contributed to the rise of right-wing Hindu Nationalism in India.

Lastly, the intention is to explore how the escalation of populism in India under Prime Minister Modi has led to increased challenges concerning Pakistan's security. Through an in-depth analysis of these questions, we aim to provide a more nuanced understanding of the intricate relationship between populism, policy decisions, and their consequences within India and the broader global context.

Exploring Populism: Core Concepts and Characteristics

The concept of populism is comprehensively explored by Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017) in their book *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*. The main argument of the work is that populism is an approach supported by many people based on specific sets of ideas. Furthermore, the core tenets of populism can be distilled into three fundamental concepts, as elaborated below. Populism is a multifaceted political phenomenon characterized by several key features. Firstly, and perhaps most notably, populism is distinguished by its ability to attract and mobilize the masses. Populist movements and leaders often harness a broad society's grievances, frustrations, and aspirations, appealing to many individuals who feel marginalized or dissatisfied with the status quo. This mass appeal is a defining element of populism, as it seeks to rally significant popular support, often through charismatic leadership and simple, relatable messages. Populist leaders aim to establish a strong connection with the people, positioning themselves as champions of the common person.

Secondly, populism inherently involves a critique of the elites, viewing them as a smaller, privileged segment of society that often holds significant power and influence. Populist rhetoric frequently portrays these elites as detached from the concerns of the broader population, emphasizing the divide between the political, economic, and cultural elite and the everyday citizens. This critique of the elites is a fundamental component of populism's narrative, driving a wedge between the 'establishment' and the 'ordinary people.' Populist leaders position themselves as anti-establishment figures, promising to challenge the entrenched power structures and restore the people in decision-making.

Thirdly, populism asserts that politics should be conducted in a manner that resonates with and is accepted by the masses. Populist movements often prioritize a direct, emotional connection with the public, advocating for policies and approaches that reflect the preferences and concerns of everyday citizens. This emphasis on the will of the people can manifest in various ways, such as referendums, town hall meetings, or frequent engagement with the public through social media. Populist leaders argue that traditional political processes and institutions have become unresponsive to the needs of the majority, and they seek to revitalize politics by making it more accessible and accountable to the people they claim to represent. In sum,

populism is marked by its ability to attract a broad popular following, its critique of societal elites, and its commitment to politics that reflects the interests and aspirations of the masses. These three defining characteristics underpin the populist worldview and shape its governance and political engagement approach.

Meanwhile, Lucie Calléja (2020), in her journal article, writes about the populism practiced in India and how the country's relations, especially with Pakistan, are being affected by it. In contemporary times, two ideologies, which are usually seen in affiliation with populism, include nationalism and socialism. The right-wing supporters of the ideology are attached to the former one, while the left-wing populists opt for the latter.

In another scholarly work by Kaul and Vajpei (2020), the authors delve into the impact of nationalism on the principles of secularism and diversity. In the case of India, we can see how populism can affect civil society and how it can also be responsible for snatching civil liberties. For example, it is observed that due to the increase in right-wing populism in India, many minorities face difficulty practicing their religion. The following features can thus be highlighted:

Populism as a Threat to the Liberal System

Populism tends to thrive within fragile democratic systems, with the primary objective of establishing an 'illiberal democratic environment.' In such illiberal democracies, the formal democratic processes are ostensibly in place, but the system often operates in ways that counter democratic principles. While elections may still be held, the general public often lacks real power, as ultimate authority rests with a populist group that implements cultural policies that tend to govern in an oppressive manner (Bonet & Zamorano, 2021). While liberal democracies strive to offer their citizens the utmost freedom and opportunities for participation, there is a growing presence of non-democratic values in contemporary politics (O'Neil, 2010).

This also drives Indian populism, challenging liberal institutions, policies, and norms. According to populists, the liberalism of democracy weakens the political position of the masses and, hence, needs to be set aside for the proper functioning of democracy. Populism is perceived as a threat to liberal democracy because it views the liberal democratic system as the source of a sense of deprivation due to its perceived unjust policies. Liberal democracy is a system based on freedom and individual rights. The polarization of democracies worldwide shows how people and society are moving away from a liberal perspective and shifting towards populism in the 21st century. The rise of nativism and the shift towards unilateralism, as opposed to bilateralism and multilateralism, are viewed as reactions against the global world order, stemming from the urgency to protect one's ethnic and national identities (Miller, 2011).

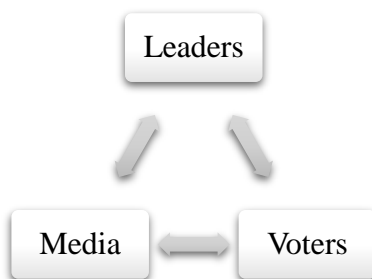
Driving Mechanism of Populism

Populism perceives liberal democracy as the breeding ground for elites who manipulate and exploit the system to further their interests, often at the expense of the broader population (Patomäki, 2020). The populist narrative regarding immigrants can be seen as inherently illiberal, leading many Western states to contend with the 'us versus them' debate. Notable instances include the UK's 2016 Brexit referendum, rooted in the idea that native populations were facing economic challenges due to immigration, as well as President Donald Trump's 'Make America Great Again' slogan, which carried an anti-immigrant undertone. Consequently, these examples can be regarded as populist decisions that oppose liberalism (Galston, 2018). The following section discusses the three main driving mechanisms of populism, as outlined below:

Action Formation Mechanism

Within the Action Formation Mechanism, a noteworthy observation is the significant role that psychological triggers play in mobilizing the masses within the context of populism. The accompanying figures illustrate the triangular dynamics of the Action Formation Mechanism, where the populist movement takes shape through the intricate interplay between leaders and voters facilitated by the media. A favorable media portrayal of the Populist Party can effectively galvanize popular support. Media outlets often capitalize on the insecurities of the masses for their interests and advantages. Populist regimes manipulate the fears of the masses to secure their support through psychological tactics. This fear and anxiety can then morph into animosity against their rivals, ultimately translating into votes for the Populist Party.

Figure 1. Action Formation Mechanism



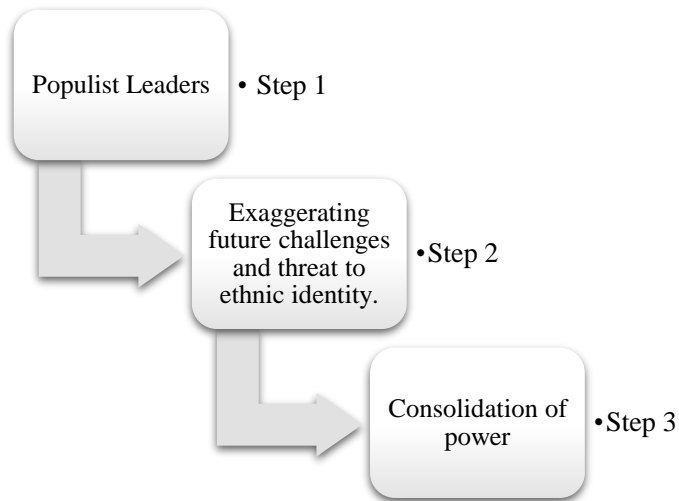
Source: Compiled by the author.

Transformation Mechanism

The Transformation Mechanism comes into play following the emergence of ‘collective paranoia’ incited by the Populist Party. This consolidation is achieved with sensationalist media’s assistance and the masses’ cultivation of fear. These actions can be categorized into four primary methods, which are as follows:

- i. *Alienation:* Through alienation and the cultivation of collective paranoia, individuals are made apprehensive about the potential loss of their ethnonational identity.
- ii. *Victimization of the Majority:* By victimizing the majority and portraying them as a marginalized community, this strategy is employed to manipulate perceptions and sentiments.
- iii. *Drive to be ‘Great Again’:* By instilling in the masses a desire to become ‘Great Again,’ the Populist Party can create a powerful drive that may result in structural and systemic changes within the political system, with the support of both the media and the people.
- iv. Populist Parties employ the ‘us’ vs. ‘them’ debate as a tactic to isolate the masses from other segments of the community. This strategy generates a sense of urgency among the people to safeguard their ‘unique culture’ and ensure that their indigenous identity is not threatened by ‘outsiders’ who are, in fact, part of the same community. This approach fosters a collective paranoia within society, ultimately aiding the party in securing the support of the majority.

Figure 2. Transformation Mechanism



Source: Compiled by the author.

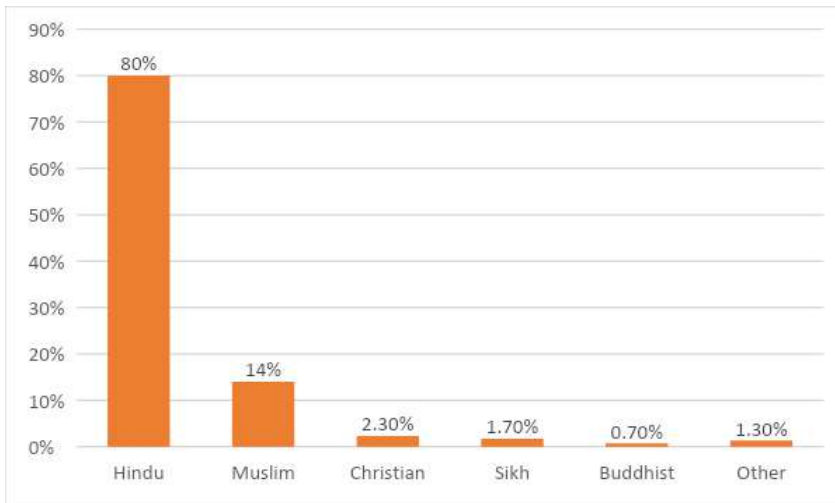
Situational Mechanism

Perceived deprivation and a sense of disrespect can also serve as catalysts for populism among the masses, driven by the prevalent discontent. Consequently, scholars such as Rodrik (2017) focus on the anxiety surrounding economic fairness rather than absolute equality. The term ‘angry populism’ aptly encapsulates debates surrounding ‘Fair Trade,’ which often center on ‘alienating the people’ and fostering divisions among different social groups. In the case of India, the media has been employed as a tool to promote the Hindutva policies of the BJP and has contributed to the cultivation of paranoia among the masses. It is also evident that the utilization of media for right-wing populist interests has resulted in an escalation of hostility and violence against minority groups in India.

Populism in India: A Case Study

Hindus comprise almost 80% of the population in India, constituting a clear majority. Muslims account for more than 14% of the population, making them the largest minority group. Christians comprise 2.3% of the population, while Sikhs comprise 1.7%. Other minority groups include Buddhists, Jains, and others (Kramer, 2021). This information is depicted in the chart below:

Figure 3. Religious Population of India



The Emergence of the BJP as a Populist Party

During the late 1970s, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, under the leadership of Vajpayee, was able to take control of the government through the coalition of three other parties, leading to the formation of the Janata Party. However, the government failed and disintegrated in 1979 due to specific internal conflicts and factionalism. This split resulted in the formation of the BJP in 1980, as certain leaders of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh refused to endorse the RSS as they considered it an extremist organization. With time, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh regrouped as the BJP and was led by Vajpayee, Murali Manohar Joshi, and Lal Krishan Advani (McDonnell, 2019). With the BJP’s emergence, Hindutva took center stage in Indian politics. The BJP has been a big advocate of Hindutva ideology; this ideology is in strong contrast to the Indian National Congress’s secular ideology and is focused more on Hindu Culture and trying to define Hindu values. No populist government is complete without a defining ideology, and Hindutva is that ideology for the BJP.

The populist notion of being a Hindutva nation leads the party policy tilted towards an anti-secular stance that is against the idea of a homogenous Indian population. Hindutva discards liberal democracy by opposing pluralism and canceling out any adversaries in making nationhood. In doing so, the BJP pursued a majoritarian rule that was carried out by Hindus or Indians who aligned themselves with the populist policies, thus confining the minorities to the corner. Modi clarifies the divide between the ‘true citizens,’ aka the Hindus, and the ‘courtesy citizens,’ referring to the minorities. He portrays minorities as a threat to the building of nationhood, which helps him create an anti-minority narrative among the majority, and this way, he can make populist votes (Raychaudhury, 2023). Populism in India has three main actors, which are as follows (Eatwell & Godwin, 2018):

- i. *The Elite:* In this case, the BJP portrays elites as actors against the Hindutva Agenda, basically the liberal factions. This entails the higher class and wealthy minorities. This form of populism is often called ‘ethno-populism’ as it is based on the identity of the people and the leader. These elites are often presented as anti-state agents harboring goodwill towards Pakistan.

- ii. *General Will:* In the same context, the people’s collective will is constructed to align with the will of the nationalist agenda of the party. For this purpose, various tools are used to make the minds of the general populace, for example, using media to construct Hindutva narratives.
- iii. *The People:* The most crucial factor in Populism is the People. The people in populism are referred to as the common individuals. In India’s case, the common man is associated with the Hindu majority, which has perceived that the BJP is the guardian of Hindu values. Thus, people must restore Hindu values to keep the BJP in power. Prime Minister Modi and his party accomplished this by creating a divide between the commoner and the minorities and also making sure the common person was against the minorities. In doing so, they also portray Pakistan as an enemy of Hindutva and are interfering in Indian matters by sponsoring the elites mentioned above and minority groups.

Table 1. Hindutva as the Causal Mechanism

<i>Action</i>	<i>How Populist Leaders Consolidate Power</i>	<i>How PM Modi Consolidated Power</i>
<i>Alienation</i>	Through alienation, they are scared of the loss of their ethnonational identity.	PM Modi exploited the already existing differences between Hindus and Muslims, claiming that they could not coexist, thus leading to alienation.
<i>Victimization of the Majority</i>	Through the victimization of the majority and making them feel like they are the marginalized community.	Muslims posed a threat to their culture, religion, and identity. This made the Hindus perceive themselves as a marginalized community.
<i>Drive to be ‘Great Again’</i>	Creating the drive to be ‘Great Again’ in the masses can lead to structural and systematic changes in the Political System by the Populist Party with the help of the media and the people.	Saffronization talks about India’s glorious past. Modi believes his destiny is to undo it and make India ‘Great Again.’

Source: Compiled by the author.

PM Modi’s Use of Media as an Action Transformation Mechanism

The media is one of the driving mechanisms for populism, and the BJP has made effective use of that. Modi took full advantage of new forms of media to communicate directly with the people. He used WhatsApp, SMS, MMS, 3D holograms, radio shows, and TV channels to connect and mobilize the masses. These strategies were heavily used during his election campaign in 2014. This extensive use of social media to mobilize his followers has been labeled ‘high-tech populism.’ (Bhattacharya, 2020). Modi established a strong media presence by institutionalizing Hindutva policies.

Table 2. BJP and INC performance in the general elections of 2014 and 2019

Year	General Election	Seats Won by BJP	Seats Won by INC
2014 General Election	16 th Lok Sabha	336	59
2019 General Election	17 th Lok Sabha	352	91

Source: Economic Times of India (2019).

Since becoming Prime Minister, Modi has used media effectively and efficiently. Moreover, a continuous rise was observed in both media usage and reliance on it. However, instead of relying on the traditional methods of the press, he adopted modern trends like social media such as Twitter and Facebook (Calléja, 2020). By March 2022, PM Modi’s followers on different social media apps were:

Twitter	90.2 million
Instagram	77 million
Facebook	48 million
YouTube	16.3 million

PM Modi has centered his image on right-wing Hinduism and presented himself as a leader to whom the common people can relate. His anti-secular stance has made him a mobilizing force in his own right. The table below compares the qualities of Populist leaders in the light of BJP members and Congress members:

Table 3. Qualities of a Populist Leader

<i>Characteristics of Populist Leaders</i>	<i>Characteristics of PM Modi (BJP Populist Leader)</i>	<i>Characteristics of previous leaders under the INC</i>
<i>A Common Leader.</i>	Modi portrayed the INC as an elitist party and himself as a commoner person who came from a humble background. He positioned himself as a leader representing the common people.	The previous leaders under INC belonged to the ruling elite class, and their lifestyle had little in common with the masses.
<i>Security from the ‘others.’</i>	By taking a solid anti-Muslim stance, Modi promises that he will eliminate the perceived threats posed by Muslims.	The policies of the INC were less harsh towards Muslims, and India was promoted as a secular state.
<i>Ideology</i>	Modi has been advocating Hindutva ideology since day one.	The leaders of the INC never adopted an official ideology.
<i>Engage with masses</i>	Modi tries to engage with his followers through social media but refrains from giving press interviews.	The INC leaders tried to engage with the people through their speeches and interviews.

<p><i>A populist leader is expected to be more authoritarian.</i></p>	<p>The BJP has a centralized approach to decision-making.</p>	<p>The INC had a decentralized approach to decision-making.</p>
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Source: Compiled by the Author.

Anti-Minority Laws Introduced Since 2018

A populist leader requires constant support from the masses to stay in power. Hence, they attain majority support by exploiting minorities, depicting them as a perceived threat. Under the banner of populism, minority groups frequently experience limitations imposed by stringent laws, and these regulations have a diverse range of effects on minority communities. A populist leader asserts that only they or their political party can effectively address the perceived threats. In the Indian context, the BJP has achieved success in portraying itself as the guardian against minority-related threats. Consequently, this strategy fosters contentment among the general populace, ensuring continued support for the populist leader and the popular narrative they have cultivated. Keeping this fact in mind, the Modi regime has introduced the following laws:

Citizenship Amendment Bill 2019

The enactment of the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) introduced by the BJP in 2019 was a rigid populist move. Although the bill was initially designed in 2016, it took the government three years to pass it; as the bill faced substantial opposition, many people protested that the law was illegal and went against India’s secular values protected by the constitution.

Indian National Register of Citizens 2019

Right after the enactment of CAB, another law was passed, the Indian National Register of Citizens. The basics of the NRC are that it is a record of all legal Indian citizens. It contains demographic information about all those people who, according to the 1955 Citizenship Act, are legal inhabitants of India. The data was first gathered in 1951, was only recently updated, and was limited to the state of Assam. However, it was announced in November 2019 that the register would now be stretched to the whole country (Raj, 2020). The aim was to identify all those people who have been illegally living in India so they could be detained and deported. It was a way to counter the high Muslim demographics in Assam and to make sure the Muslims remained a low minority legally.

Article 370, Revoking Kashmir’s Autonomy

The populist government of Modi was against *Article 370* as it gave an advantage to the ‘other’ at the expense of ‘the people.’ In addition to this, the Hindu nationalists believed that *Article 370* was a factor enabling terrorism in Kashmir. They further asserted that this article should have never come into force in the first place and labeled it as one of those acts that were put forward by the corrupt elites of INC to please the Muslims (Srivastava, 2019). Therefore, by diluting this Article, the Modi regime claimed it was fixing a past mistake, and many Hindus widely appreciated this move. India also labeled this undemocratic move as an ‘Internal Matter’ and that Pakistan had no right to discuss it at any International Forums (Al Jazeera, 2019).

India’s Agenda and Narrative towards Pakistan

The friendly neighborhood policy through which India establishes good relations with the neighboring countries is their way of encircling Pakistan. Under Prime Minister

Modi, India had specifically improved her bilateral relations with Afghanistan and Iran, two neighboring countries of Pakistan on its western borders. India and Iran had been working on naval collaborations in the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean; this move was mainly to counter Pakistan and China’s economic cooperation in Gwadar. India had also been heavily investing in Iran’s Chabahar port for similar reasons.

The Chabahar port was supposed to create ease further for India to conduct trade with Afghanistan. However, after the 2018 reimposition of sanctions by the US, the IRCON deal fizzled out (Haidar, 2020). When talking about Afghanistan, India has always supported it in its claim over Pashtuns and has tried to assist Afghanistan economically as well. So, by improving relations with Pakistan’s neighbors, Iran and Afghanistan, India was trying to contain Pakistan’s influence, and this relationship with both neighbors made it easier for India to fund terrorism in Pakistan due to the economic impact that India held over these two states (Bhatti et al., 2019). The table below explains the relationship between India and Pakistan:

Table 4. Roots of Rivalry between India and Pakistan

<i>Roots of rivalry</i>	<i>India’s Stance</i>	<i>Pakistan’s Stance</i>	<i>BJP’s Narrative</i>
<i>Different religion</i>	The majority of people in India are Hindus.	The subcontinent was divided based on religion, and Pakistan was formed as a Muslim-majority state.	In line with the ideology of Hindutva, the BJP believes that the subcontinent’s partition should never have occurred.
<i>Territorial conflict</i>	Kashmir was a princely state in the Indian Subcontinent during British rule. The Maharaja of Kashmir signed the Instrument of Accession (October 1947).	Pakistan wants a plebiscite to be held in Kashmir and supports Kashmiris’ Right to self-determination.	In 2019, the BJP revoked Articles 370 and 35A, which granted Kashmir autonomy and made the Indian constitution applicable there.
<i>Geopolitical Conflict</i>	India wants to be the regional hegemon, but the rising influence of neighboring China threatens its position.	Pakistan and China have a strong alliance and are involved in several developmental projects, such as CPEC.	To counter the Sino-Pakistan alliance, India, under the BJP, has been solidifying its alliance with the US, e.g., the QUAD Security Dialogue.

Source: Compiled by the author using the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation (2019).

Sponsoring Terrorism in Pakistan

India has been funding terrorism in Pakistan, particularly in Balochistan, the largest province of Pakistan. The province of Baluchistan not only covers 42% of the country but also has immense strategic importance. It is home to Gwadar Port, which has the potential to transport a significantly large portion of global oil. It also serves as an energy corridor between the Central Asian States and the Arabian Sea for shipping oil and gas. Balochistan has also witnessed insurgency movements that were and are being backed by India to create problems for Pakistan (Khetran, 2017). Moreover, the Indian government is also trying to hamper Chinese-funded CPEC projects going on in

Balochistan. Consequently, PM Modi has tried to use the Balochistan insurgency to defame Pakistan on numerous occasions, for example:

- i. During his speech on Independence Day in 2016, he pointed out how Pakistan has been abusing human rights in Balochistan. In 2016, Kulbhushan Jadhav, an Indian naval officer, was arrested in Balochistan, and he admitted that he was working with the insurgents to destabilize Balochistan as well as to disrupt the CPEC advances made there.
- ii. To promote its propaganda, India's foreign intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), launched a web radio in the Balochi language (Venugopal, 2016).
- iii. In 2018, it also established a 'Free Balochistan' office in New Delhi; several insurgents from Baluchistan, along with the members of RAW, work for this office (Khan, 2021).

Portraying Pakistan as a Terrorist State

Ever since 9/11, Pakistan has been associated with allegations of sponsoring terrorism. India has played a significant role in defaming Pakistan. India has made sure to capitalize on the situation to its advantage; a recent example is the Pulwama attacks of 2019. In the suicide attack carried out in the Pulwama district of Indian-Occupied Kashmir, 40 Indian police officers lost their lives. At the same time, it was reported that Jaish-e-Muhammad, an extremist Islamic group operating from Pakistan, claimed responsibility for the attack. The Indian government asserted that the Pakistani government had a role in this matter. Despite Pakistan's denial of any involvement in the attacks, the Indian Prime Minister continued to blame Pakistan for the attack. (BBC, 2019).

Challenges for Pakistan's Security Due to India's Populist Agenda

India's domestic politics directly impact its foreign policy regarding Pakistan. This is because the BJP government has been using Pakistan to justify its draconian laws, such as the Citizenship Amendment Act or the revocation of *Article 370*. These fascist government policies that aim to turn Muslims of India into second-class citizens have a direct negative impact on India's image as the world's biggest democracy as well. Furthermore, India's domestic issues, exacerbated by the Narendra Modi government's harsh tactics, have become the primary obstacle to its foreign policy successes (Pritam, 2020).

Emerging Ethnic Genocide in India and Potential Refugee Problem for Pakistan

The rise of Hindutva Politics in India has led The Genocide Watch Group, founded by Gregory Stanton, to sound alarm bells to inform the world about the potential ethnic cleansing and genocide of Muslims in India. A global summit from February 26th to February 28th was held in New Delhi titled 'India on the Brink: Preventing Genocide.' Former Attorney Greg Gordon, who had worked with the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and Human Rights Activists from around the world, concluded the summit by saying that the genocide in India was already underway (Sen, 2022). The spread of false information, the dehumanizing of the minorities, and the calls for violence against them were all proof of the fact that the ethnic conflict between Hindus and Muslims in India had resulted in the start of genocide, targeting the Muslims.

Indian False Information Campaign and Cyberwarfare against Pakistan and their Implications

The BJP argues that the present corrupt elite cannot be trusted to represent the pure people of India, that is, the Hindus. Additionally, they emphasized that these elites do not exhibit enough firmness toward the neighboring country, Pakistan, which is considered a significant adversary under Hindutva ideology (Varshney, 2021). According to them, an Islamic country being born out of India is the height of disrespect and something against which all Hindus need to unite. In propagating Hindutva ideology, the spread of disinformation is considered to be an essential instrument of the state's policy. The deliberate deceiving of the masses through the help of mass media is referred to as the spread of disinformation. The BJP government used the media actively to spread their propaganda and create situations that benefitted them (Saleem, 2021). One prominent instance of India disseminating propaganda to undermine Pakistan on a global stage was revealed in 2020 by a European NGO named 'Disinfo Lab.' They disclosed their 15-year-old operation, 'Indian Chronicles,' which began in 2005. India was exposed, manipulating information, spreading fake news, and conducting research on ways to create anti-Pakistan sentiments.

The *Disinfo Lab* reported that the Indian Government was operating more than seven hundred media channels across more than a hundred countries with the sole purpose of spreading misinformation against Pakistan. The Indian Government strategically utilized registered non-governmental organizations to serve its interests. Specifically, it aimed to garner support from international governmental organizations such as the UN or IMF by tarnishing Pakistan's reputation. This operation also dug out dark secrets used by the Indian Government, such as identity theft and the hijacking of dead NGOs. These media outlets and NGOs worked to create dissent in Pakistan and aimed to damage Pakistan's reputation in the international arena. The dissemination of disinformation against Pakistan was aimed at isolating the country within the global system while also seeking to weaken its financial conditions. A prominent example involves the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), where India lobbied against Pakistan's interests to have it blocked (Shukla, 2019).

Pakistan's National Security Policy in Response to Rising Populism in India

The policies, legislation, and political actions of the BJP government are all pointing toward the gradual erosion of Indian secularism. India is home to 1.41 billion people, out of which 19% are comprised of minorities (Sahoo, 2022). The Hindutva government and its aim of having a majoritarian government in place will lead to the loss of religious freedom for minorities in the state. Indeed, the impact of this trend is already evident in the laws implemented by the BJP's government.

On the 14th of January 2022, Pakistan launched its first public National Security Policy. This NSP deals with six main aspects of the state: Economy, defense, national cohesion, foreign policy, internal security, and territorial integrity. The NSP was created after seven years of consultation and analysis by the National Security Committee. This policy was introduced as the first-ever strategy that is both inclusive and citizen-centric in its basis. The National Security Policy (NSP) is set to undergo annual revisions, and its primary emphasis lies in deterring conflicts and actively pursuing peaceful resolutions.

In the National Security Policy (NSP), within the 'Neighborhood' section, it is highlighted that the rise of Hindutva-driven politics in India is a matter of profound

concern and directly impacts Pakistan's security. Moreover, the section also discussed the unilateralism India has taken under Prime Minister Modi and how these actions are expected to create hurdles for developing peace in the region ("National Security Policy of Pakistan 2022-2026", 2022, p.36). The use of media and cyberspace to create and spread false information about Pakistan has also been cited in the document as a critical hurdle for developing peace and cordial relationships between the two neighbors.

The NSP credits India with limiting Pakistan's eastward connectivity with the help of its regressive approach. This regressive approach is also a significant hurdle in cordial relationships between both states. For lasting peace, India must involve the international community in addressing the Jammu and Kashmir issue. However, India sees it as an internal matter. Pakistan holds that it will renew trade ties with India only after they resolve the crisis in Jammu and Kashmir. While India claims it will only continue trade alliances with Pakistan after Pakistan effectively deals with its terrorist problems (National Security Division, 2022).

Impediments to Sustainable Peace in South Asia

Sustainable Peace means providing options like collaborative problem-solving, dialogue, and state cooperation. This means that the states are unlikely to opt for violence, oppression, or conflict among themselves. Sustainable Peace in a region can be measured by the fair and equal distribution of resources, highly functional governments, low levels of corruption, high education levels, good relationships among neighboring states, and a free flow of information (Coleman, 2022). If all of these factors are present, a region has sustainable peace, but the absence of these factors in the South Asian region shows us how sustainable peace is lacking. Instead, we can see negative peace among the South Asian states. Negative Peace is the lack of violence due to a ceasefire. The conflict has not been transformed but instead has been prevented (Dačić, 2018).

Conclusion

Populism, akin to other ideologies, possesses a defined structure and driving force. The primary objective of populist regimes is to pursue an 'illiberal democracy,' where the populace is repressed and lacks genuine power. Populism often revolves around the people mobilizing against 'the Elite,' becoming the prevailing agenda for the majority. However, foreign policy changes under Prime Minister Modi have remained relatively modest in India. For the most part, he has continued the legacy of previous leaders, focusing on core objectives such as becoming a regional power, expanding India's economic influence, and addressing the threats from China and Pakistan.

Two discernible ways in which the impact of populism on Indian foreign policy manifests are the increased centralization in decision-making and a more assertive approach toward Pakistan. It is not surprising that the relationship between India and Pakistan has deteriorated under the BJP government, given the challenges this presents for Pakistan. The effects of rising populism in India are evident, from the majority-centric government to calls for the ethnic genocide of minorities. Incidents like the Karnataka Hijab Ban, the Haridwar Hindutva Conference, and the blatant boycott of Muslim-owned shops in India depict the rise of right-wing populism.

These incidents, among others, have raised global concerns about the surge in hate crimes against Muslims. India has faced criticism from Pakistan, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and numerous states and prominent NGOs concerned with the potential genocide against Muslims. This has already impacted Pakistan,

ranging from the potential refugee crisis that could create chaos to the use of cyber warfare against Pakistan by right-wing Hindutva media outlets, fostering an ‘us’ vs. ‘them’ narrative that negatively affects Pakistan’s reputation.

However, tensions between the two nations will persist as long as the Kashmir conflict endures. The resolution of the Kashmir Issue is contingent upon both states actively listening to each other and moving towards cooperation. The prospect of resolving the Kashmir Issue hinges on both states consciously opting for positive peace or if its resolution aligns with the national interests of both parties. In this anarchic world, states are likely to prioritize national interest, and currently, the interests of both states and their governments involve exploiting the Kashmir issue to garner mass support.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

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Strategic Culture of India and Pakistan and its implications for Strategic Stability

NUST Journal of International Peace & Stability
2024, Vol. 7(1) Pages 51-63



njips.nust.edu.pk

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.37540/njips.v7i1.159>

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Abstract

This paper examines the strategic cultures of India and Pakistan, their development through time, and their relative effects on South Asia's strategic stability. It explains the distinctive components that make up each nation's strategic culture, influenced by historical events, political processes, national identities, and geopolitical circumstances, via in-depth research. The research highlights essential contrasts in the strategic cultures of Pakistan and India and attributes these differences to the divergence in their distinct national trajectories and political evolutions. The historical non-alignment, democratic ethos, economic objectives, and geopolitical factors are used to examine the Indian strategic culture. The paper also considers how these strategic cultures affect the intricate connection between these nuclear-armed neighbors by building on this basis. It broadens the discussion to consider how Pakistani and Indian strategic cultures may affect South Asia's regional stability. The research highlights strategic cultures' crucial role in determining regional dynamics and interstate interactions.

Keywords

Pakistan, India, Strategic Culture, Strategic Stability

Introduction

The states of India and Pakistan comprise the South Asian geopolitical sphere, which is representative of a complex and unstable strategic environment that has been substantially influenced by the unique strategic cultures of these two countries (Ali, 2022). The complicated relationship between India and Pakistan, shaped by a complex union of ideological differences, historical tensions, and nuclear dynamics, fundamentally defines the strategic dimensions of the regional landscape (Rubin & Stulberg, 2018). Despite being a relatively new contribution to international relations theory, strategic culture significantly impacts how a country aligns its strategies in

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Received 11 January 2023; Revised 12 August 2023; Accepted 21 August 2023; Published online 13 December 2023

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cooperative and conflictual situations. An array of presumptions, norms, attitudes, and ideas that make up a nation's strategic culture are intricately entwined with that nation's identity, political philosophy, geostrategic reality, and historical journey. These elements influence a nation's security and military decision-making, enabling it to meet various geopolitical issues (Snyder, 1977). 'Strategic culture' refers to a region's conventions, beliefs, perspectives, behavioral patterns, habits, symbols, accomplishments, and unique methods of responding to and overcoming issues in the face of force. Although a strategic culture may last a long time, individual elements and the culture are impenetrable to change (Lock, 2010).

In the context of South Asian geopolitics, where the delicate equilibrium between peace and the looming potential for conflict holds immense significance, the strategic cultures of India and Pakistan assume a pivotal role in shaping the landscape (Sargana & Hussain, 2017). Emanating from their intertwined histories, particularly the enduring ramifications of the 1947 partition, a culture characterized by deep-rooted mistrust and animosity has firmly taken root. This underlying backdrop serves as the foundation for the strategic cultures that interplay between Pakistan and India, exerting a profound influence on the overall stability of the region (Sahgal, 2019).

To unravel the intricate nature of strategic culture, dissecting the diverse factors that contribute to its formation is imperative. This study highlights the complex relationships among these distinct strategic cultures and clarifies how these interconnections impact the region's stability through overt and discreet means. The importance of this topic is highlighted by the unstable geopolitical alignments, ongoing military conflicts, territorial disputes, and weapons manufacturing competition that characterize South Asia's security environment. Additionally, the nuclearization of Pakistan and India in 1998 added complexity to their strategic cultures and regional stability (Sahni, 2020).

Three fundamental ideas serve as the foundation for the research's theoretical framework. First, the concept of strategic culture, as stated by Johnston (1995), emphasizes the legacy of culture and historical events in influencing how states have behaved strategically. Second, the idea of nuclear deterrence, first put out by Brodie and Dunn (1946) and later refined by Jervis (1989), proposes that nuclear-armed nations exercise restraint towards one another under catastrophic retaliation. The third viewpoint is realism, promoted by Waltz (2010). According to this viewpoint, governments behave mainly to further their national interests in international relations, creating an anarchic system. When integrated, these theoretical frameworks offer a comprehensive, multifaceted perspective for analyzing the intricate strategic dynamics of India and Pakistan and their implications for the strategic stability of South Asia.

This research endeavors to delve into the intricate interplay between the strategic cultures of India and Pakistan and their consequential effects on the overall strategic stability in the South Asian region. By scrutinizing the distinct strategic cultures of these neighboring nations, the study aims to unravel the underlying factors that shape their respective approaches to security and defense. Understanding how these strategic cultures influence decision-making processes, military doctrines, and regional policies becomes paramount in assessing the broader implications for strategic stability. Through an in-depth analysis, this research seeks to provide valuable insights into the nuanced dynamics between India and Pakistan, shedding light on the potential impact on the overall stability of the South Asian geopolitical landscape. The ultimate goal is to address the central research question: How do the strategic cultures of India and Pakistan influence the strategic stability of the South Asian region?

Research Methodology

In undertaking this research, a comprehensive mixed-method approach has been employed to ensure a holistic understanding of the complex dynamics between the strategic cultures of India and Pakistan and their impact on the strategic stability of the South Asian region. A thorough data collection was undertaken, drawing from various primary and secondary sources. These sources encompassed official records, academic works, insightful think-tank studies, and a thorough examination of media products, contributing to a robust and well-rounded dataset.

The culmination of this data collection was followed by a meticulous comparative analysis, where the strategic cultures of India and Pakistan were systematically contrasted. This comparative lens is essential in elucidating the divergences and convergences within their respective approaches to security and defense.

The interpretation of findings embraces a methodological richness, incorporating qualitative thematic analysis and strategic culture theory. This combination of analytical frameworks allows for a nuanced understanding of the gathered data. It facilitates the extraction of more profound insights into the intricate ways strategic cultures influence decision-making processes, military doctrines, and overall regional policies. Utilizing these methodological tools enhances the robustness of the research, contributing to a comprehensive and insightful exploration of the interplay between strategic cultures and the strategic stability of the South Asian geopolitical landscape.

Literature Review

The strategic cultures of India and Pakistan and their subsequent implications on South Asian strategic stability are essential issues that demand significant academic research, given the complex dynamics influencing the strategic landscape of the area. The fundamental works of Johnston (1995) give the intellectual foundations of strategic culture. They describe strategic culture as a collective set of beliefs, standards, and behaviors relating to using force derived from historical events and influenced by regional, sociopolitical, and economic factors. These standards have helped direct further research on the strategic cultures of Pakistan and India.

In his analysis of Indian strategic culture, Basrur (2001) claims that it is defensive, characterized by strategic restraint, and a tendency to use force only when considered essential. However, according to a study, India's strategic culture may be changing in favor of a more aggressive posture due to perceived security concerns, as seen by its growing military might and nuclear doctrine (Ganguly & Biringer, 2001).

Pakistan's strategic approach, on the other hand, is remarkably different, mainly focusing on security issues and solidly rooted in a strict military ethos. According to Fair (2018), Pakistan's sense of serious threats from India, together with a desire for balance, were the driving forces behind the decision to pursue nuclear capability. Haqqani (2016) offers an insightful viewpoint by exploring how Islam has shaped Pakistan's strategic thinking and deftly ties together the complex relationships between religion and the country's security posture. The confluence of these unique strategic cultures has significant ramifications for South Asia's strategic stability. The ongoing struggle over Kashmir and the subsequent nuclear weapons race between the two countries, according to Paul (2005), are harmful to the strategic stability of the area. A fuller understanding of the hazardous dynamics of the Indo-Pak nuclear standoff and its potential to destabilize the region (Ganguly & Biringer, 2001).

However, Cho (2011) suggests that more economic cooperation and steps to boost mutual trust between India and Pakistan might improve regional strategic stability. Nevertheless, despite such claims, Cheema (2009) and Cohen (1997) contend that attaining long-term stability is still challenging due to the ingrained historical distrust intricately intertwined with their particular strategic cultures. There are obvious gaps in the literature, especially in the context of how these strategic cultures are changing in response to the shifting geopolitical landscape and the effects of these changes on regional stability, even though the current literature offers critical insights into the strategic cultures of India and Pakistan and their impact on South Asian strategic stability. The present study aims to fill these gaps and broaden this critical area of research.

Pakistan: Strategic Culture

The particular combination of Pakistan's historical development, geographic location, sociopolitical reality, and perceived security concerns makes up its strategic culture, and it serves as an essential lens through which to view the nation's interactions with other countries. An intriguing and challenging study of this culture is how it influences relationships with neighbors and regional stability (Briskey, 2022). Its history has significantly influenced Pakistan's strategic culture, which emerged from the turbulent British Indian split in 1947. The ongoing competition with India, marked by three major wars and other crises, has left Pakistan's strategic mindset deeply uneasy and driven it to pursue national survival relentlessly. Paul (2005) explains how the historical rivalry between India and Pakistan has primarily dictated the importance of national security and territorial integrity. Given Pakistan's strategic geographic location at the intersection of South Asia and the Middle East, as well as its closeness to rival nations and contentious neighbors like India, Afghanistan, Iran, and China, its strategic culture is greatly influenced. Living in such a geopolitically unstable area requires ongoing ability and awareness due to the inherent difficulties and hazards (Umar, 2016).

Fair (2014) points to two fundamental problems that have emphasized Pakistan's security tactics and heightened its perception of danger. The first is the long-standing territorial dispute between Pakistan and India about Kashmir. Second, Pakistan's security worries have been worsened by the rising anxiety about Afghan instability, especially post-US withdrawal (Fair, 2018).

This prevalent insecurity has dramatically influenced the country's efforts to achieve military parity and build a credible deterrent to create a balance of power. Pakistan's choice in 1998 to acquire nuclear weapons is a prime example of this strategic stance. This achievement was made possible by the urgent necessity to frighten away prospective enemies, and it has since been taken as an immutable aspect of Pakistan's strategic calculations (Khan, 2005). The acceptance of nuclear deterrents represents the country's unbreakable entwining of dread, insecurity, and strategic sovereignty. It also serves as a security tool. When considering Pakistan's strategic culture, it is essential to consider the role of the military. Cheema (2009) stated that historically, the Pakistan Army has not only been a critical player in the administration and policy-making of the nation but has also often overstepped its institutional bounds. The military's sway over foreign and domestic policy formulation has considerably impacted Pakistan's strategic conduct. Another distinctive feature of Pakistan's strategic culture is how Islam, the official religion, is incorporated into the story of national security. Haqqani (2010) also explains how Pakistan's status as an Islamic

republic has shaped its internal sociopolitical structure, exterior ties, and strategic postures.

The strategic culture of Pakistan is profoundly ingrained in a complex matrix of internal dynamics, changes in global politics, notable historical events, and its particular geographic location. Significantly, this complex dynamic regulates Pakistan's interactions with its neighbors, notably those in South Asia (Lavoy, 2006). The 1947 partition, a turning point in history, generated ongoing competition with India and provided the foundation for the emergence and development of Pakistan's strategic culture. The historical event, which was characterized by intense animosity and strong rivalry, is still having an impact on Pakistan's foreign policy and overall geopolitical standing. This complicated interaction provides insights into Pakistan's strategic culture's dense tapestry and its long-lasting effects on regional and global dynamics (Şahbaz, 2020). This past still instills an intense fear and a tireless pursuit of national survival in Pakistan's strategic psychology. In fact, because of this historical effect, Pakistan strongly emphasizes security, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, which significantly impacts its strategic decisions and interactions (Mughal, 2012).

Furthermore, Pakistan's geopolitical situation needs ongoing vigilance and preparedness to react to regional movements due to its location at the crossroads of South Asia and the Middle East and its closeness to unstable neighbors like India. The pursuit of military parity, especially with India, and developing a credible deterrent capacity are features of Pakistan's strategic culture. An essential step in this direction was Pakistan's acquisition of nuclear weapons in 1998, which helped to deeply ingrain nuclear deterrence in its strategic culture (Rana, 2018).

Political changes from military to civilian government have profoundly impacted Pakistan's strategic culture. Military regimes like Zia ul-Haq and Pervez Musharraf have affected Pakistan's strategic inclinations differently. The military has a significant role in influencing strategic and policy decisions even when the civil government is in place. Pakistan's struggles with state identity add complexity to its strategic culture, further complicating the situation. Pakistan finds itself at a crossroads affecting its strategic stance, self-perception, and diplomatic connections as a state with a dual identity as a South Asian nation and an Islamic republic (Şahbaz, 2020).

Global political landscape changes have left profound and long-lasting marks on Pakistan's strategic culture. The end of the Cold War, the worldwide war on terror after the 9/11 attacks, and China's rapid expansion to become a global powerhouse have all prompted reevaluations and adjustments to Pakistan's strategic compass, and each of these turning periods offered Pakistan a distinct set of chances and difficulties, forever influencing the development of its strategic culture (Rizvi, 2003).

As a result, Pakistan's strategic culture has developed into dynamic and complex patterns that are carefully woven with threads from historical experiences, geographic propensities, internal politics, and international events. This culture's constant evolution reflects Pakistan's constant need for security, identity, and global position. Beyond Pakistan's boundaries, the effects of this complex strategic culture significantly impact the strategic stability of the South Asian area. It provides an essential perspective to interpret and comprehend Pakistan's activities and interactions in the regional and global arena. This knowledge is critical given the complex interplay of power relations that Pakistan negotiates internationally (Lavoy, 2006).

India: Strategic Culture

India's strategic culture is significantly influenced by its historical legacy, intricate civilizational principles, deeply embedded democratic ethos, geopolitical realities, and increased focus on economic and technological progress. India's strategic culture has evolved through time, and this evolution may be seen as a series of changes that have taken place concurrently with regional and international political upheavals (Tanham, 1992).

After India gained independence from the British Empire in 1947, its strategic culture soon took shape, mainly due to the nation's colonial past and the ideals of its brand-new sovereignty. During this period, leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru played a crucial role in guiding the nation away from the bipolar power dynamics of the Cold War and towards a non-alignment strategy (Singh, 2013). The cornerstone for Indian policy at this time, which was centered on diplomatic relations and peaceful coexistence, was Nehru's *Panchsheel* principles. Despite the pacifist undertone, India's early strategic culture was not without its challenges, as seen by the 1962 border confrontation with China, a significant event that forced a thorough assessment of the country's defensive strategies (Gordon, 1994).

Since then, internal and foreign sociopolitical upheavals have coincided with the development of India's strategic culture. After the war with Pakistan in 1971, the emergence of Bangladesh was a turning point because it demonstrated India's willingness to use force to protect its interests. As a result, India's nuclear weapons development was launched, marking a fundamental change in India's strategic focus (Jones, 2006). However, India's nuclear doctrine, which follows a 'no first use' stance, attests to its commitment to the measured and restrained use of force. The vibrant internal diversity and democratic character of the country also have an impact on its strategic culture (Joshi, 2012).

India continuously strives to balance its strategic objectives and democratic ideals, given its position as a diverse country that firmly upholds democratic rules. India's foreign interactions, which usually prioritize discussion, diplomacy, and multilateral cooperation, reflect this difficult balance. India's strategic culture has been intricately linked to economic development and technical achievement for many years (Chaaterji, 2020). Economic liberalization significantly impacted the strategic environment in the 1990s, which helped India emerge as a significant participant in the global economy. Traditional security goals and worries about economic development, technological advancement, energy security, and climate change are all part of today's strategic culture (Liebeg, 2021).

India's maritime policy, which highlights the need to protect maritime interests, maintain essential sea lines of communication, and confront non-traditional security concerns, including piracy and maritime terrorism, shapes India's strategic culture as a critical player in the Indian Ocean area. India's strategic culture is constantly changing to reflect the possibilities and difficulties posed by the current state of the world (Paranjpe, 2020). The country's growing international influence influences the shape and course of this evolution, its complex interactions with major world powers like the US, Russia, and China, its participation in regional organizations like the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and its views on international issues like terrorism and climate change.

A non-alignment strategy, which embodied an in-depth understanding of global power dynamics and a constant drive to retain strategic autonomy, primarily affected India's strategic culture during the Cold War. India's approach to nuclear

deterrence, which both rejected the Cold War's binary logic and opposed nuclear proliferation, reflected this worldview. A significant change in India's strategic culture began with the end of the Cold War. The demise of the Soviet Union, a crucial Cold War partner, and the emergence of the United States as a sole superpower required a thorough reevaluation of India's strategic ties. This transition was expedited by India's economic liberalization in the 1990s, which sparked the country's emergence as a developing market economy. Consequently, India strengthened its connections with the West, and the historic India-US nuclear accord of 2005 was a turning point in India's strategic development.

India's strategic culture is primarily concerned with minimizing the effects of China's ascent and growing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region in the present geopolitical situation. This environment offers India a variety of economic benefits while also posing considerable geopolitical difficulties. India is driven to reconfigure its strategic posture in reaction to China's ascent to global prominence, giving more weight to its position and goals within the larger Indo-Pacific region (Bhaskar, 2021). Due to China's growing influence, India now faces geopolitical difficulties and economic possibilities. Tensions have increased due to ongoing border disputes and recent confrontations in the Galwan Valley in 2020, prompting India to review its policy towards China. Consequently, India is adopting a more aggressive stance, as shown by its expanded involvement in the Indo-Pacific region and active participation in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), including in the US, Japan, and Australia.

The contact between India and its close South Asian neighbors significantly impacts the country's strategic mindset. The ongoing Kashmir dispute, memories of previous wars, and difficulties with cross-border terrorism significantly influence India's strategic culture, which significantly affects India's complicated relationship with Pakistan, marked by hostility and peace endeavors. Additionally, interactions with other neighbors, like Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives, strengthen India's position as a regional power and influence its strategic choices.

Domestic political variables such as the structure of civil-military ties, the function of bureaucracy, and the sway of public opinion have all impacted India's strategic culture. The political environment of India changed from one-party rule to coalition administrations and, more recently, to a strong majority government, which had a considerable impact on the country's strategic culture. India's strategic culture is dynamic and intricate, which reflects the country's historical trajectory, national character, internal difficulties, and shifting global conditions (Basrur, 2022). Its development through time captures India's efforts to carve out a strategic position in a world that is changing quickly, balancing its commitment to peace with realpolitik realities, its pursuit of economic progress with security requirements, and its regional ambitions with global obligations (Misra, 2018). Understanding India's strategic culture is essential to predicting India's future trajectory and any possible ramifications for regional and global stability as India continues to advance on the world stage.

Shifting Dynamics: Strategic Cultures in the Evolving South Asian Landscape

The strategic cultures of India and Pakistan are more than just a product of impersonal geopolitical facts or rough historical occurrences. They are entangled with the private tales of nationhood, identity, and survival that the people of these nations have fashioned.

India, renowned for having a wide range of cultures, views itself as one entity where many different languages, faiths, and ethnic groups coexist. The democratic process used to bring it to nationhood has been characterized by its importance for discourse and compromise. India's diplomatic approach to international dealings and its defensive but assertive military posture are both influenced by this history. Conversely, the fight for a Muslim-only state on the Indian subcontinent gave rise to Pakistan. A strategic culture that prioritizes national security and the military might have been influenced by the feeling that the country has carved out a space for itself in the face of existential threats. How each nation interacts with the others has been molded by these various nation-building experiences. For India, a diplomatic approach is encouraged by its strategic culture, which believes that conversation can settle disputes (Jones, 2006). Nevertheless, it is watchful and conscious of the necessity of a robust defense against prospective threats.

On the other hand, Pakistan often views itself as the weaker, lesser force in the situation. It views the bolstering of military might as an essential component of its national identity and existence and a defense tool. The perspectives of these nations towards one another are essential in more ways than merely military conflicts or diplomatic negotiations. These strategic cultures likewise influence their approaches to regional challenges like climate change, water security, and disaster management. In certain domains, collaboration is not only advantageous but also necessary. However, the historical distrust and geopolitical rivalry between India and Pakistan often prevent such cooperation. The capacity of India and Pakistan to comprehend and negotiate these disparities ultimately determines the stability of the South Asian area. This extends to ordinary people as well as top military and diplomatic officials.

These gaps may be closed by building personal ties, increasing communication, and boosting confidence and trust among Indians and Pakistanis. Involving impartial third parties who can resolve disputes while considering the distinct strategic cultures of both nations may be beneficial at the same time. It is essential to remember that although India and Pakistan have distinct histories and strategic cultures, they have a shared destiny in the region as we confront common challenges and possibilities. Although the road to peace may be difficult, it may be traveled with mutual respect and understanding. India and Pakistan's divergent strategic cultures heavily influence their military plans, nuclear programs, and conflict resolution methods (Khan, 2021).

Imagine India as a person who wants to play a significant role in the world while still needing to meet the demands of a large and varied nation. India is like someone attempting to multitask, juggling various security issues, as per its bigger size, diversified people, and expanding international aspirations. India's military policy resembles a vigilant watchdog, emphasizing defensive measures to safeguard its interests and territory. On the other hand, Pakistan may be seen as a smaller neighbor who lives in the background. India has always been Pakistan's primary concern. It resembles being always on high alert, prepared to protect itself at any moment. In order to balance India's conventional power, Pakistan has been compelled to have a sizable permanent army and to engage in asymmetrical warfare tactics.

It is as if India and Pakistan are playing the same game with different rules when it comes to nuclear deterrents. India has a 'no first use' policy and plays it safe, seeing nuclear weapons more as a deterrent than as tools for use in combat (Lora, 2020). However, Pakistan is prepared to consider all options, including the deployment of nuclear weapons, to counter India's overwhelming conventional forces because it feels

the strain of an unfair playing field. This discrepancy in the game's rules undoubtedly makes the area's instability more unpredictable and dangerous.

Their respective strategic cultures impact conflict resolution between these two countries. Imagine India as someone who values direct communication while resolving conflicts. It supports diplomatic engagement and bilateral talks. On the other hand, Pakistan thinks it would be on the losing end of a direct discussion and prefers to use a third party as a mediator, particularly in international fora. These divergent desires complicate conflict settlement, as we have seen in enduring crises like the Kashmir dispute (Anders, 2011). Given these difficulties, improving South Asia's strategic stability will take time. It takes understanding, persistence, creating trust, and ongoing communication to restore a problematic relationship. Tensions might be decreased by resolving the long-standing disagreements gradually rather than attempting to expedite the process.

It is also time to reconsider what security means in South Asia. Let us abandon the military-centric perspective and acknowledge non-traditional dangers, including public health emergencies, climate change, and water shortages. By cooperating, India and Pakistan may establish common ground, foster trust, and promote regional peace. Important friends or neighbors may play a big part, just like in any community. Countries with interests in South Asia, such as the US, China, and Russia, may be helpful neighbors by developing confidence-building measures, boosting discussion, and ensuring their conflicts do not feed the India-Pakistan conflict. In essence, while having differing strategic cultures, India and Pakistan share the desire for regional stability (Abbasi, 2015). This objective is undoubtedly achievable with empathy, tolerance, and teamwork.

The strategic cultures of India and Pakistan will change along with the regional and global environments. Pakistan's strategic alliance with China and India's ascent to global power status are expected to impact each other's strategic cultures and, as a result, the region's strategic stability. In addition to conventional land-based security issues, India's rising worldwide importance is accompanied by a stronger focus on marine security, technology, and space. India's strategic culture is becoming more outward-looking, emphasizing establishing a rules-based international order and promoting regional connectivity as it broadens its strategic scope beyond South Asia. The strategic balance in South Asia as a whole and its approach to Pakistan may be affected by this change. On the other hand, Pakistan's partnership with China, which has taken the form of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), continues to influence its strategic culture (Anwar et al., 2017). Given India's worries about China's expanding influence in South Asia, this deeper alliance may increase Pakistan's strategic confidence, but it also has the potential to worsen tensions with India.

Another essential element in the shifting South Asian strategic scenario is technology. On both sides, advancements influence strategic considerations in cyber security, artificial intelligence, and space technology. Realizing their potential influence on national security, India and Pakistan invest in these sectors. Given the lack of robust regulatory frameworks, these improvements also pose new dangers and difficulties for the stability of strategic relations.

The region's growing terrorism and extremism is a significant additional issue. Although both India and Pakistan are aware of this issue, their divergent viewpoints sometimes result in allegations against one another, harming their relationships. A crucial internal security concern for Pakistan is the continuous fight against militancy and extremism, which also impacts its strategic culture (Nawaz, 2016). In a larger

sense, environmental issues and climate change are becoming non-traditional severe security challenges that might worsen current tensions and conflicts in South Asia. One example is the divisive topic of water sharing between Pakistan and India. Again, how both nations respond to these difficulties will be heavily influenced by their strategic cultures.

Strategic Culture: Challenges and their Implications on South Asia's Strategic Stability

India and Pakistan's distinct historical experiences, political environments, and national identities have all contributed significantly to the development of respective strategic cultures, which in turn have a substantial impact on the strategic stability of the South Asia area. India has embraced a defensive and status-quo-focused strategic culture despite having a rich historical history, diversified culture, democratic ethos, and a prominent position worldwide (Paranjpe, 2020). In contrast, Pakistan's strategic culture tends to be more revisionist and security-focused due to its rivalry with India, internal tensions, and search for strategic depth (Khan, 2005).

The unsolved territorial disputes between India and Pakistan, notably over Kashmir, are one of the main factors undermining the strategic stability in this area. These conflicts, when considered through the prism of their distinct strategic cultures, increase the likelihood of serious clashes and, as a result, threaten the stability of the area. Additionally, the different approaches that Pakistan and India have chosen in their interactions with external countries have a significant impact on the strategic stability of the area. The divergent relationship patterns have made the dynamics more complex, with Pakistan expanding its connections with China while India is growing closer to the US and the West.

India and Pakistan's opposing nuclear ideologies significantly impact South Asia's strategic stability. In contrast to India's 'no first use' policy, Pakistan's entire spectrum deterrence doctrine reflects its assessment of existential dangers. Such opposed nuclear stances have sparked a nuclear weapons race and encouraged mutual fear, which inevitably damages the strategic stability of the area. Divergent perspectives on non-state entities and international terrorism exacerbate these tensions. India views these factors as serious security challenges, in striking contrast to Pakistan's view, which sees them as weapons for asymmetrical warfare and a source of ongoing tension (Rana, 2018).

The strategic cultures of Pakistan and India, which are contaminants of their unique historical, political, and sociological settings, have a significant impact on the strategic stability of the area. However, a sophisticated comprehension of these strategic cultures may show the way to series that reduce friction and advance peace. Both states can potentially increase strategic stability through enhanced communication, confidence-boosting measures, and efficient conflict resolution systems supported by a thorough grasp of each other's strategic cultures. Understanding and skillfully managing these diverse strategic cultures is essential for realizing long-lasting peace and stability in South Asia.

Conclusion

It is indisputable that the stability of the South Asian region is greatly influenced by the varied strategic cultures of Pakistan and India, which are formed by their respective national ideologies, historical backgrounds, and political contexts. These strategic cultures are dynamic, changing, and retort to local and international upheavals rather

than static structures. The unambiguous cultural differences between Pakistan and India, where Pakistan is primarily motivated by security concerns and India is oriented mainly towards maintaining the status quo, profoundly affect their bilateral interactions and, consequently, the region's stability.

The ongoing issues between the two countries, which include unresolved territorial disputes, diverse foreign alignments, differing nuclear doctrines, and contrasting perspectives on non-state actors and terrorism, are considerably exacerbated by their different strategic cultures. Understanding the regional dynamics and allowing successful diplomatic measures thus need an understanding of these cultural differences. These factors work together to create the complex security situation in South Asia, characterized by cyclical periods of stress and brief periods of peace. This research also suggests that more strategic stability would be possible if we better understood each nation's strategic culture. This insight emphasizes the need for open communication, mutual trust, and efficient conflict-resolution techniques considering various cultural understandings. Securing long-term peace and stability in the region will depend on how well India and Pakistan handle their different strategic cultures as they set their strategic courses in a rapidly changing world.

In the end, knowing India and Pakistan's strategic cultures is critical to understanding their strategic behaviors and the ensuing dynamics of regional security. Policymakers, strategists, and academics will continue to focus on these nations' strategic cultures and their effects on regional stability as they develop and become more prominent worldwide. This conclusion emphasizes how important it is to continue learning about and comprehending these strategic cultures if South Asia is to experience peace and stability.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

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UN Call to Action: Exploring the Responsibilities & Roles of Peacekeepers—A Case Study of Pakistan's Peacekeeping Training Department

NUST Journal of International Peace & Stability
2024, Vol. 7(1) Pages 64-79



njips.nust.edu.pk

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.37540/njips.v7i1.164>

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Abstract

Maintaining peace is intricate, with Blue Helmets symbolizing hope for millions. They play a pivotal role in peacekeeping, raising questions about its ease. Effective partnerships with international and local actors require dedication and preparedness. UN Peacekeepers must execute their mandate professionally, protecting themselves and upholding UN rules. This study explores the significance of deploying peacekeepers and the establishment process of the UN Peacekeeping Training Department. Analyzing peacekeeping policies like the Brahimi Report 2000, Capstone Doctrine 2008, and others delves into the complexity of deployment. Case studies of Pakistan's Centre for International Peace and Stability and Peacekeeping Training Department provide insights, supplemented by UN reports and discussions with peacekeeping staff.

Keywords

Peacekeepers, Brahimi, Capstone, UN training, policy.

Introduction

The Charter of the United Nations was created primarily to deal with disputes and conflicts between sovereign states (*United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines*, 2008). In this regard, there are about 140 UN Peacekeeping Agencies worldwide. So far, millions of military personnel, including UN police officers and civilians from more than 120 countries, have participated in UN peacekeeping operations worldwide. The UN has deployed more than 70 peacekeeping missions in various parts of the world, and more than 3,000 UN peacekeepers from some 120 countries have died while on duty under the UN flag (*Our History*, n.d.).

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Received 18 June 2023; **Revised** 24 August 2023; **Accepted** 17 November 2023; **Published online** 31 January 2024

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While UN Peacekeeping Operations aim to provide peacekeeping efforts, they often become targets in conflicts, presenting numerous challenges for their mission.

The history of the UN Peacekeeping Operations journey goes back to 1948 when conflict broke out between the Arabs and Israel. The Security Council authorized the deployment of UN military observers to monitor and maintain a ceasefire to control the war; however, the operation was designated as the United Nations Truce Observer Organization (UNTSO). Since then, the UN has deployed 57 missions worldwide, 14 still ongoing. In the early stages, UN missions consisted of unarmed military observers and somewhat lightly armed forces—their responsibility revolved around monitoring, reporting, and confidence-building duties in the conflict zones (*Our History*, n.d.). In 1956, the first United Nations Emergency Response Force (UNEF) was deployed to resolve the Suez Crisis (United Nations, n.d.-b). It was the first Armed Peacekeeping Operation of its kind. After that, the UN launched a long-term operation in Cyprus, the Middle East, and Lebanon (*United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines*, 2008). Conflicts during the post-Cold War were handled with peace support operations, but with the changing global politics, sustaining peacekeeping became a serious issue. The new trends in conflict demanded changes in the peace operational mechanisms that changed the strategic landscape of the UN Peacekeeping Operations (*Our History*, n.d.). The UN shifted its peacekeeping approach from traditional to multi-dimensional to address evolving conflicting issues. This approach enabled the UN to implement comprehensive peace agreements with lasting outcomes.

With that transition, there was a rapid rise in Peacekeeping Operations worldwide. The UN took it as a sense of purpose to eradicate state conflict peacefully. Between 1989 and 1994, the Security Council approved around 20 new operations and deployed 75,000 peacekeepers, a considerable jump from 11,000 (*United Nations Report of the Special Committee*, 2005). The new missions included UN Angola Verification Mission I (UNAVEM I) and UN Angola Verification Mission II (UNAVEM II), UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), Peacekeeping Operations in countries such as the UN Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL), UN Mozambique Operation (ONUMOZ) and UN Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) (*Our History*, n.d.). All these missions were deployed to implement complex peace agreements in the conflict states and helped the mission zone stabilize its security environment and reorganize its military and police services. Along with such measures, the UN missions aimed to set new democratic governments/institutions in the conflicting states through proper elections.

The UN missions were successful overall, significantly elevating the standards of UN Peacekeeping Operations. However, in the 1990s, the UN faced setbacks in fulfilling its mandate, as evidenced by unsuccessful missions such as the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR), and the United Nations Operation in Somalia II (UNOSOM II) (Role of the Security Council, n.d.). The UN failed to establish peace in these three states. Consequently, UN Peacekeeping Operations encountered substantial criticism, leading to insufficient allocation of resources and political backing for the peacekeepers. Also, the civilian casualties eroded the overall reputation of the UN Peacekeeping Operations. With this, the UN Security Council began to reflect on its existing peacekeeping policies and analyzed what went wrong to prevent future failed missions.

In the 20th century, after reviewing its failures, the UN tried to introduce reforms to overcome the challenges peacekeeping faced in the 1990s (*Reforming*

peacekeeping, n.d.). The larger objective behind reforms was to enhance efficiency and enable the peacekeepers to manage the challenges more effectively and maintain vital field operations. In 1999, the UN became custodian of two more complex conflicts - the UN Interim Administration in Kosovo (*UNMIK*, n.d.) and the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (*UNTAET*, n.d.) After that, the Security Council took more complex and large-scale UN Peacekeeping Operations in African countries that included the UN Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (Blanchfield et al., 2019), Burundi (*ONUB*, n.d.), Côte d'Ivoire (*ONUCI Fact Sheet*, n.d.), Democratic Republic of the Congo (*MONUC*, n.d.) (*MONUSCO Fact Sheet*, n.d.), Eritrea/Ethiopia (*UNMEE*, n.d.), Liberia (*UNMIL*, n.d.), Sierra Leone, Sudan (*UNIMIS*, n.d.), Darfur (*UNAMID Fact Sheet*, n.d.), (*UNISFA*, n.d.), South Sudan, Syria (*UNMISS*, n.d.), etc. UN Peacekeepers restored the reputation of UN Security Council Peacekeeping and established its mandate of peacebuilding operations in Haiti (*MINUSTAH*, n.d.) and Timor-Leste (*UNMIT*, n.d.).

However, both in Haiti and Timor-Leste, the peace situation was considered fragile. Despite challenges, over 110,000 personnel currently serve in 14 peacekeeping missions, indicating a shift towards peaceful transition (*Our History*, n.d.). These operations continue to advance political processes, protect civilians (*Protecting Civilians*, n.d.), support disarmament efforts (*Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration*, n.d.), and contribute to rebuilding functional states by organizing elections, promoting human rights, and reinstating the rule of law (*Building Rule of Law and Security Institutions*, n.d.).

There are four types of peacekeeping missions: conflict prevention, peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and peacebuilding (*Terminology*, n.d.). Conflict prevention involves diplomatic solutions to keep intra-state or inter-state tensions and disputes from escalating into conflict. The Peacekeepers consider measures to resolve conflict in progress and incorporate diplomatic action to negotiate an agreement between the parties concerned. Peace enforcement applies a range of coercive measures, including military force. In this regard, the role of the UN peacekeepers becomes crucial. They facilitate the political process to protect civilians, disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate the combatants. They also stand for human rights and restoring the rule of law. In some instances, the UN Peacekeepers can use force to defend themselves, civilians, and their UN mandate where the state fails, but they require special permission from the UN. All these measures will be discussed at length in this study.

Research Methodology

This study employs conceptual research methodology to observe and analyze existing information on the historical foundations of UN peacekeeping operations. Practical experiments were not conducted; however, informal discussions were held with the Government of Pakistan and the Foreign Office of Pakistan to enhance understanding of various concepts related to peacekeeping operations and the peacekeepers' mode of operation. The names and timeframe of the officers consulted for this study remain confidential to maintain privacy.

Abstract concepts and ideas are considered in analyzing the UN call for action measures and various restrictions. This paper uses Pakistan as a case study to gain insight into the UN Peacekeeping Operation. The analysis examines various UN reports/policies to understand the reasons and impacts of changes made to UN peacekeeping operations. Furthermore, the study investigates the conditions set by

these reports for peacekeepers and how states implement them by establishing Peacekeeping Training Departments. The paper also discusses Pakistan's efforts to establish its Peacekeeping Training Department and draws conclusions based on the findings.

Brahimi Report 2000:

In 1999, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan established a panel to address the challenges UN Peacekeepers face and offer policy input to overcome these barriers. Led by Algerian Chancellor Mr. Lakdar Brahimi, the panel's report, edited in 2000, became a guiding document for UN Peacekeepers, offering a crucial and realistic approach to enhance and improve their role as peacekeepers. The Brahimi Report presented various recommendations aimed at preventing genocides, as witnessed in Rwanda in 1994 and Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995.

Key recommendations included prioritizing prevention over dealing with the consequences of war, addressing poverty in conflict zones, and bridging the gap between discourse, financial resources, and political support. The report also advocated for reforming civilian police for improved law and order, implementing demobilization and reintegration programs, ensuring the Secretary-General is well-informed about mission expectations and outcomes, maintaining adequate employment capacity, systematizing the recruitment of mission leaders, encouraging local police through states to participate in UN missions, recruiting civilian staff to achieve mission goals, providing enhanced logistic support, and sustaining an integrated approach, among other suggestions (Brahimi Report, 2000).

The Brahimi Report marked a revolutionary approach to Peacekeeping Operations, offering a comprehensive analysis of how to enhance UN Peace Missions and attain greater success. It transformed Peacekeeping Operations from traditional to multinational missions in the field, acknowledging the necessity to employ force beyond self-defense (William et al., 2003). The protection of civilians emerged as a crucial benchmark for evaluating the success or failure of UN Peacekeeping Operations.

Nevertheless, the Brahimi report identified the need for proactive measures to address the evolving nature of peace operations. It called for a robust peacebuilding strategy, emphasizing the importance of a clear, credible, and achievable mandate. The report advocated for the authority to intervene against violence targeting civilians as an essential element for effective peacebuilding in complex Peacekeeping Operations, posing a challenge for transitional civilian administration.

Despite these challenges, the report offered explicit definitions of various deployment benchmarks, recruitment strategies, logistics support requirements, and the effective formation of public opinion in field missions (William et al., 2003).

Capstone Doctrine (2008)

The Capstone doctrine marked a significant shift following the Brahimi Report, aiming to operationalize the recommendations outlined by transforming them into a practical field manual. This doctrine is considered a crucial tool for peacekeepers, elucidating distinctions between traditional and multidimensional Peacekeeping Operations and identifying robust Peacekeeping Missions. However, later revisions of the Capstone doctrine focused on International Humanitarian Law (IHL), emphasizing that Human Rights primarily apply in times of peace. At the same time, International Humanitarian

Law becomes essential when the jurisdictional order is disrupted, especially in cases of conflict.

The primary instruments of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) are prioritized, with a focus on critical conventions such as Geneva Convention I (1949)—safeguarding the wounded and sick from armed forces during campaigns; Geneva Convention II (1949)—protecting the wounded, sick, and shipwrecked from armed forces at sea; and Geneva Convention III (1949) (Martin, 2020)—safeguards civilians. Additionally, the Capstone doctrine underscores the importance of Geneva Convention (1977) Additional Protocol I, reinforcing the protection of victims in international armed conflicts, as well as Protocol II, protecting victims in non-international armed conflicts, and Protocol III, adopting another distinctive emblem, the Red Crystal (*United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines*, 2008).

The Capstone doctrine emphasizes the actions peacekeepers should take, including noting the facts, promptly reporting violations, and acting in accordance with the mandate based on conflict situations. Furthermore, it stresses the importance of coordination with the human rights component and calls for peacekeepers to memorize the sequence of these actions.

The principles of IHL encompass humanity, military necessity, proportionality, the distinction between civilians and combatants, and the prohibition of causing unnecessary suffering (Razza & Sherman, 2020). These principles hold significance for peacekeepers when undertaking any operation. By adhering to IHL principles, peacekeepers can align their Peacekeeping Operational decisions with Human Rights, establishing a connection that becomes a cornerstone in the rules of engagement on the field. This linkage forms a comprehensive framework integrating IHL, Human Rights, and the rules guiding peacekeepers, underscoring their critical role within the Capstone doctrine (Razza & Sherman, 2020).

The mission's mandate is derived from the Security Council (SC) Resolution, tailored to the specific conflict situation and existing peace agreement. It incorporates other SC resolutions addressing the protection of women, children, and civilians in armed conflicts. The primary focus of the UNSC's activities lies in observation, monitoring, and reporting, employing methods such as static posts, patrols, overflights, or other technical means, all with the agreement of the involved parties. The mission oversees the implementation of ceasefires, provides support for verification mechanisms, and engages in interposition as a buffer and confidence-building measure.

The contemporary landscape of peace and security activities encompasses a range of interventions, including conflict prevention, peace enforcement, peace-making, and peacebuilding. In today's context, threats take diverse forms, such as failed states, ethnic conflicts, transnational armed groups, drug trafficking, and terrorism. The doctrine underscores the authority of UN peacekeepers to employ limited force to mitigate these threats (*United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines*, 2008).

High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (2015)

The Brahimi Report provided a detailed plan for implementing the UN Peacekeeping Operations. However, after fourteen years, the UN Secretary-General announced a review of the peacekeeping operations for better outcomes. He established the High-Level Independent Panel in 2014, commonly known as HIPPO (*Report*, 2015). The panel was established to assess the UN Peace Operations and special political missions. The panel also examined the challenges faced by addressing the emerging needs of

populations. It was a strong move to improve the quality of peacekeeping operations and achieve the UN mandate.

HIPPO identified bifurcation in planning, management, and funding mechanisms between Peacekeeping Operations and the spectrum of peace operations. Such measures enabled the UN to adopt flexible and tailored missions and avoid bureaucratic constraints. Hippo's recommendations were reflected in Secretary-General Guterres' Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative in 2018 (Martin, 2020).

Improving Security of United Nations Peacekeepers (2017)

This report centers on protecting UN peacekeepers, encompassing uniformed and non-uniformed personnel, including international and national staff and volunteers within the UN Security Management System. The primary objective of this report is to minimize peacekeeping fatalities. Examining the period from 1948 to 2017, an average of 13.7 fatalities per year occurred. Since 2011, however, fatalities have reached a plateau, attributed to increased acts of violence in MINUSMA, MINUSCA, and MONUSCO (*Improving Security of United Nations Peacekeepers*, 2017). The predominant threat types identified were vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs), improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and indirect fire attacks. Troops stationed in Africa faced heightened risks, particularly from VBIEDs and IEDs, and continue to be under severe threat today (*IED attacks continue*, 2023).

Between 2013 and 2017, there were a total of 176 military personnel, nine police officers, eight national civilians, and 2 UN volunteers who lost their lives. In 2017 alone, 56 fatalities occurred, with approximately 199 individuals sustaining injuries (*Improving Security*, 2017). These alarming statistics prompted the United Nations to reassess its existing strategies and policies for Peacekeeping Operations, leading to the heightened emphasis on protecting peacekeepers as a pivotal aspect of the new policy plan.

Action for Peacekeeping Initiative (2018)

Due to numerous casualties, the UN Security Council was eager to formulate a revised plan to prevent the rise of fatalities. In this regard, in 2018, the UN Secretary-General launched the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P), intending to establish mutual political commitment between the UN Peacekeepers and the local setup to enable them to keep the peace and sustain it in the future in a conflict zone. In 2018, the Secretary-General also hosted the GA73 meeting (*GA73 High-Level Meeting on Action for Peacekeeping*, n.d.) to bring the international community on the same page to pursue UN goals (*Action for Peacekeeping*, n.d.). Almost all concerned member states agreed to the cause that they will work with the UN Peacekeepers on eight priority areas that included politics; women, peace, and security; protection; safety and security; performance and accountability; peacebuilding and sustaining peace; partnerships; and conduct of peacekeepers and peacekeeping operations (*Achieving Our Common Humanity*, n.d.).

This initiative was a positive step toward involving local arrangements in achieving peace in conflict-ridden environments. It reflected the realization that sustaining peace necessitates the active involvement of local communities. However, some critics argue that A4P indicated a return to an exclusive focus on peacekeeping, neglecting the broader spectrum of peace operations (Martin, 2020). Consequently, the UN developed a more comprehensive plan to engage local communities alongside peacekeepers, aiming to accomplish the UN mandate and create a conducive

environment for Peacekeeping Operations with reduced costs and increased safety and security for peacekeepers.

Operations of the UN Peacekeeping Department

Until the late 1980s, UN Peacekeeping Operations were managed through the UN Office of Special Political Affairs. The formal establishment of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) occurred in 1992 under the leadership of Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. In 2002, the UN Secretary-General, the Peace Operation Department (responsible for operational mechanics), and the Peace Operation Support Department (responsible for logistics) facilitated a transition from traditional peacekeeping to robust peacekeeping and Multi-Dimensional Peacekeeping. This shift aimed to identify and address weaknesses in Peacekeeping Operations. Additionally, the Secretary-General advocated for the training of peacekeepers by their respective countries.

Since then, it has become mandatory for Troops Contributing Countries (TCC) and Police Contributing Countries (PCC) to undergo training at designated UN Peacekeeping Departments. The United Nations Integrated Training Service (UNITS) within the Department of Peace Operations has played a central role since 2007. UNITS conducts UN Regional Training in Entebbe for officials involved in current missions, certifying them to serve as peacekeepers in conflict zones. UNITS directs and coordinates peacekeeping training under the Policy, Evaluation, and Training Division of DPKO. Under the overall supervision of the Chief of UNITS, the incumbent is tasked with planning, coordinating, conducting, and evaluating the program, among other responsibilities.

With time, the UN Security Council and the UN Peacekeeping Department again identified a grey area and required a dedicated integrated training department. Several vital objectives drove the establishment of UNITS:

1. Analyse various peace missions.
2. Analyse the peacekeeper's performance.
3. Analyse peacekeepers' respect towards other key UN Peace Operational Departments in the mission area.
4. Identify specific subjects that are essential for training.

In this context, developing Core Pre-Deployment Training Material (CPTM) and subject modules related to women has become indispensable for all peacekeepers. The inclusion of CPTM, along with Specialised Training Materials (STMs) such as those for Military Observers (MO) and Staff Officers (SO), has emerged as a crucial component in the training regimen for peacekeepers. Furthermore, ensuring that all peacekeepers possess a comprehensive understanding of UN actors across various multi-dimensional levels is imperative.

Specifically, the role of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) becomes pivotal in this context. UNOCHA is critical in coordinating all UN departments and facilitating effective communication and collaboration. By incorporating CPTM and STMs and emphasizing knowledge of UN actors, the training framework aims to equip peacekeepers with the necessary skills and insights to navigate complex multi-dimensional peacekeeping environments.

In the hierarchy of a UN Mission, three crucial portfolios stand out: the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and two Deputy SRSGs. One

of the Deputies holds the UNOCHA Deputy position. The UN Headquarters manages recruitment for all three portfolios. UNOCHA exhibits a degree of flexibility in its roles, guided by four main principles: Humanitarianism, neutrality, impartiality, and independence of action. On the other hand, the UN Peacekeepers adhere to three primary principles:

1. *Consent*: Before deploying peacekeepers, the UN ensures the consent of the belligerent parties involved in the conflict. As Chapter 7 of the UN Charter outlines, the UN can enforce its will on the belligerent partners and deploy peacekeepers.
2. *Impartiality*: Peacekeepers are required to remain impartial in the mission zone. This means accountability should be assigned according to UN rules, regardless of the party at fault.
3. *Self-Defense*: The principle of self-defense is crucial for UN Peacekeepers. In certain circumstances, the UN allows peacekeepers to use force if their lives or the lives of civilians are under threat.

The distinctive principles of UNOCHA and UN Peacekeepers reflect their specific roles and responsibilities within the broader framework of UN missions, emphasizing humanitarian action, impartiality, and using force only when necessary for self-defense.

Becoming a UN Peacekeeper mandates completing UN training, and no peacekeeper is deployed to a mission without undergoing this mandatory training. In this regard, UN modules have been adopted and integrated into the training process. While the local army historically conducted deployment in the UN Mission area, comprehensive training gained prominence with the establishment of UNITS. Subsequently, task-specific training became a standard practice.

Over time, recognizing the importance of having well-qualified peacekeeping departments, the UN Security Council encouraged states actively engaged in UN Peacekeeping Missions to establish their Peacekeeping Training Departments. While the opportunity is open, the question arises: Is it easy to establish a Peacekeeping Department?

To qualify for establishing a designated Peacekeeping Department, any state that is a TCC, PCC, or partner country can express its desire through its permanent representative in the UN Security Council and the UN Office of Military Affairs (UNOMA). The state must set up the Peacekeeping Department's organizational structure upon approval.

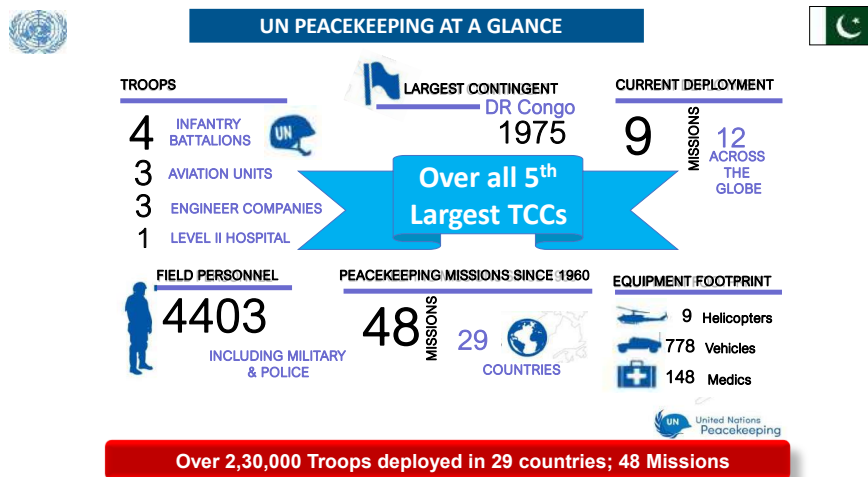
The subsequent steps involve obtaining Masters Training (MT) programs from other states and gradually preparing their MTs to train their forces. Importantly, once approved, all peacekeeping expenditures are covered by the UN dedicated fund, with the specific ratio determined by that state's GDP. Notably, states with higher GDPs receive more considerable funds than states with lower GDPs. Additionally, non-TCC or PCC states that are significant financial supporters will also have a greater say in the decision-making and policy formulation processes of UN Peacekeeping Missions, allowing for equitable resource and responsibility sharing in mission zones.

For example, let us consider the Peacekeeping Department of Pakistan in the following section to understand how a state qualifies to have its designated Peacekeeping Department.

Peacekeeping Training Department: A Case Study of Pakistan

Pakistan has a long-standing and significant involvement in UN Peacekeeping Missions, dating back to 1960 when it contributed its first batch of peacekeepers to Congo. Over the years, Pakistan has remained engaged as a TCC and PCC. Currently, Pakistan ranks as the 5th largest TCC, participating in 9 out of 12 UN Peacekeeping Missions, deploying 4,403 personnel (see Figure 1). As of May 2023, Pakistan’s total contribution to peacekeeping missions is approximately 229,000 peacekeepers spread across 48 missions on four continents.

Figure 1. Pakistan’s Contribution to UN Peacekeeping



Source: Department of Peacekeeping Training, Centre for International Peace and Stability (CIPS), National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST)

Pakistan’s contribution encompasses various roles, including contingents and observers. This includes 149 infantry battalions, four artillery regiments, four artillery battalions, two Armor regiments, 73 engineer companies, 33 hospitals, 18 logistics companies, three signals companies, and 33 aviation units. Notable deployments include 287 peacekeepers in South Sudan, 218 in Mali, 11,313 in the Central African Republic (CAR), 581 in Abyei, and 1,968 in Congo.

Furthermore, Pakistan is the second-highest contributor to UN peacekeepers who have sacrificed to uphold international peace and security. To date, 171 Pakistani Peacekeepers have valiantly laid down their lives while serving in various UN Missions.

Regarding gender representation, Pakistan is meeting the Gender Parity Strategy (UGPS) targets, with 20% representation of women in Senior Officers/Military Observers (SO/Mos). Since 2017, over 450 Pakistani women peacekeepers have served under the UN Flag, contributing to various roles such as joint/independent patrolling, community engagement, addressing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), health/hygiene, stress counseling (psychiatrists), gender advising, legal advising, and Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) activities focusing on vocational and medical aspects.

Additionally, Pakistan has actively contributed to the revision of 17 UN Manuals. It holds the distinction of being the author of the UN Manual on Aviation,

showcasing the country's commitment to enhancing and refining peacekeeping practices.

As one of the largest TCCs, Pakistan recognized the importance of establishing a dedicated Peacekeeping Training Department to meet the evolving training requirements set by the United Nations. Initially, the School of Infantry and Tactics (SINTS) in Quetta oversaw all peacekeeping training courses in Pakistan. However, ad-hoc training was conducted by the respective sectors of the specialized battalion forces.

Identifying the diverse needs of peacekeeping contributing countries and the necessity for special pre-deployment training and practical learning, Pakistan took the initiative to apply for its designated Peacekeeping Training Department. The objective was to train its forces and extend them to allied forces from friendly TCC states in the region and beyond.

As the UN-mandated subject-specific training for peacekeepers, Pakistan expressed its desire at the UN through its special representative at the United Nations Headquarters. The proposal highlighted Pakistan's intention to establish a Centre of Excellence for peacekeeping training. This step demonstrated Pakistan's commitment to enhancing and customizing training programs to meet the specific needs of peacekeepers, fostering cooperation and collaboration in the region.

In 2013, Pakistan took a significant step by establishing the Centre for International Peace and Stability (CIPS), with the foundation laid by the UN Secretary-General. The primary objective of CIPS is aligned with the broader goals of the UN Peacekeeping Department, aiming to provide training to peacekeepers in accordance with UN mandates and fostering intellectual pursuits in the field.

CIPS envisions contributing to International Peace and Stability, emphasizing peace and conflict studies, conflict resolution, strategic vision, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding. The Center operates within the framework of the existing international and regional environment, addressing the complexities and challenges inherent in maintaining peace and stability on a global scale. By focusing on these critical areas, CIPS aims to enhance the capabilities of peacekeepers and contribute to the broader objectives of international peace and stability set by the UN Peacekeeping Department (*Centre for International Peace & Stability*, 2021).² It is organized on a hybrid model consisting of peacekeeping training integrated with intellectual pursuits in international peace and conflict regimes to achieve interconnectivity and promote civil-military diplomacy among UN and international agencies, UN country teams, and other associated organizations.

CIPS stands under the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (NIPCONS). Under CIPS, three departments operate the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, the Research and Analysis Cell, and the Department of Peacekeeping Training. The CIPS has a dedicated peacekeeping department that provides on-ground, field, and active peace mission knowledge to its peacekeepers. This way, real-time information from the active mission zone is provided to the peacekeepers for better preparation for the mission zone and for excelling in knowledge-based research in peace and conflict studies.






The CIPS aligns with the UN-mandated and recommended requirements prepared by the United Nations Integrated Training Service (UNITTS). Per UNITTS-approved guidelines, the training modules include a 1-week mandatory Core Pre-

² For more information on CIPS, please visit: <https://cips.nust.edu.pk/>

Deployment Training Module (CPTM) in every course. Additionally, 1 to 2 weeks are allocated for Appointment training, categorized as Specialized Training Material (STM), which covers Military, Staff Officers, Military Observer, or formed contingent training as per UNITS-approved modules. In-mission training is provided through Reinforcement Training Packages (RTP).

As of May 2023, CIPS offers a range of courses, including the UN Senior Mission Leadership Course (UNSMMLC), UN Contingent Commanders Course (UNCCCC), UN Military Observers Course (UNMOC), UN Staff Officers Course (UNSOC), UN Comprehensive Protection of Civilians Course (UNCPOC), UN Logistics Officers Course (UNLOC), UN Pre-deployment Training (UNPDT), UN Police Officers Training Course (UNPOTC), UN Gender Advisor Course (UNGAC), and UN Female Engagement Team Course (UNFETC). The detailed list of courses offered by CIPS are enlisted in the table below:

Table 1. Peacekeeping Training courses offered by CIPS.

	Courses	Year	UN Accreditation
1	*UN Senior Mission Leadership Course (UNSMMLC)	2013	
2	UN Contingent Commander Course (UNCCCC)	2013	
3	UN Military Observer Course (UNMOC)	2013	2014 
4	UN Staff Officer Course (UNSOC)	2013	2015 
6	UN Contingent Pre-Deployment Training Course (UNPDTC)	2013	2021 
7	UN Logistic Officer Course (UNLOC)	2013	
5	UN Comprehensive Protection of Civilian Course (UNCPOC)	2016	2017 
8	*UN Police Officers Training Course (UNPOTC)	2017	
9	*UN Gender Advisor Course (UNGAC)	2019	
10	*UN Female Engagement Team Course (UNFETC)	2019	
11	UN Engagement Platoon Course (UNEPC)	2023	2023 
12	UN Explosive Ordnance Disposal Course (UNEODC)	-	2023 (Under Review)

Source: Department of Peacekeeping Training, Centre for International Peace (CIPS), National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST)

The total number of courses offered by CIPS, as of May 2023, is around 184, with allied participants totaling approximately 599 and the overall participants reaching 3,226. Notably, around 409 Pakistani females and 32 allied females from friendly countries have received Peacekeeping Training at CIPS as of May 2023. All courses are provided on a gratis basis. The detailed number of participants that have been trained as peacekeepers by CIPS (national as well as allied) are shown in the table below:

Table 2. Comprehensive Overview of Peacekeeping Training Participants in CIPS (2013-2023)

	Year	No of Courses	Allied Offrs	Countries	Pak Army Offrs	Total
1	2013	10	0	0	115	115
2	2014	18	10	10	244	254
3	2015	17	11	06	267	278
4	2016	17	38	12	250	288
5	2017	18	30	09	313	343
6	2018	19	57	17	229	286
7	2019	22	52	13	359	411
8	2020	14	45	14	188	233
9	2021	21	81	15	326	407
10	2022	20	40	12	201	241
11	2023	20	149	11	273	422
	Total	196	513	41 [total]	2765	3278

Source: Department of Peacekeeping Training, Centre for International Peace (CIPS), National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST)

In addition to training accomplishments, Pakistani Peacekeeper Mr. Faisal Shahkar has been appointed as a police advisor in the UN Department of Peace Operations (UNDPO) since November 2022. Furthermore, Helena Iqbal Saeed made history as the first Pakistani woman appointed as UN Police Commissioner in Khartoum, Sudan, in 2021, holding the position to date. These appointments reflect Pakistan's commitment to contributing to and leading in various capacities within UN Peacekeeping efforts.

Androulla Kaminara, Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan, said, "Did you know that Pakistan has one of the highest percentages of female peacekeepers in the world? Moreover, as one of the top troop-contributing countries, Pakistan deeply values the vital role played by 'blue helmets' in maintaining security and stability in many conflict-ridden areas around the world" (*Pakistanis among World's Highest Percentage of Women*, 2021).

The female officers trained at the CIPS play diverse and crucial roles within the region. They contribute to the region by serving in various capacities and providing various resources and expertise. Some of the roles undertaken by female officers include:

1. *Psychologists*: Offering mental health support and counseling services to address the psychological well-being of individuals within the region.
2. *Stress Counsellors*: Providing assistance and counseling to individuals experiencing stress or trauma, helping them cope with the challenges they may face.
3. *Vocational Training Officers*: Facilitating vocational training programs to enhance the skills and employability of individuals in the region.
4. *Gender Advisors*: Offering guidance and expertise on gender-related issues, promoting gender equality, and ensuring the integration of a gender perspective in various initiatives.

5. *Medical Professionals (Doctors, Nurses)*: Providing healthcare services, medical assistance, and nursing care to address the local population's health needs.
6. *Operations Officers*: Managing and overseeing various operational aspects, ensuring the effective implementation of peacekeeping initiatives.
7. *Information Officers*: Disseminating information, maintaining communication channels, and contributing to public awareness about peacekeeping efforts and related activities.
8. *Logistics Officers*: Managing logistical operations to support the efficient functioning of peacekeeping missions, including supply chain management and infrastructure support.

The diverse roles performed by female officers highlight their multifaceted contributions to the region's development, stability, and peacekeeping efforts. By engaging in various capacities, they bring a holistic and inclusive approach to peace and stability initiatives in the region. (*Pakistani Peacekeepers Continue*, 2022).

The first-ever Pakistani Female Engagement team in the UN Mission around the world received UN medals (the UN medal is awarded for participation in military and police operations, including peacekeeping, humanitarian efforts, and disaster relief) for serving in the Peacekeeping Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO). A team of 15 Pakistani women officers, on 31 January 2020, received significant recognition for being the first all-female group from Pakistan to serve in a UN peacekeeping mission (*The First-Ever Female Pakistani UN Peacekeeping*, 2020). FET's interactions with the local female population during patrols improve information-gathering, especially concerning women and children. It allows them to assess security and identify a genuine need for quick-impact projects. They are enhancing local women's engagement at grassroots levels and allowing the contingent commanders to develop an all-encompassing understanding and resultant strategy to benefit this neglected but needy population segment.

According to the Government of Pakistan, the role of female peacekeepers revolves around providing psychological support to local women as they grapple with conflict-related violence, including sexual abuse and the resultant depression and stress; delivering awareness sessions for women regarding health, female empowerment, self-protection against violence, child abuse, among other issues; actively provide vocational training such as sewing, embroidery, first aid, computer skills, which enable women to become effective contributing members of the community (Government of Pakistan, 2023). They frequently establish medical camps in/or near villages to offer free health care, especially to children and women, in times of emergency, and provide training to female staff of the National Police and Army to enhance their professional capacity (Government of Pakistan, 2023).

CIPS plays a pivotal role in transforming soldiers into peacekeepers. Soldiers under blue training modules take multidimensional tasks to be qualified as UN Peacekeepers. Ever since its inception, the CIPS Peacekeeping Department has never looked back and has offered 4 UN-certified courses to the peacekeepers, namely, the UN Staff Officers Course (UNSOC), the UN Military Observers Course (UNMOC), the UN Protection of Civilians Course (UNPOCC) and UN Pre Deployment Training Course (UNPDTC). Two more courses, Female Engagement Teams (FETs) and Gender Advisor Course (GAC), are on the UNITS desk review. The certified courses are attended by Pakistani forces and allied forces from friendly states. Officers from Pakistan and overseas actively participate in and get certified as UN Peacekeepers for

their respective missions. After establishing the Peacekeeping Department, UNITS analyses all content used in the training programs and identifies if all material used in the sessions aligns with the UN policy guidelines. They also inspect the concerned peacekeeping departments to understand their operational mechanisms.

Conclusion

Indeed, a call to action in a conflict situation is the job of the UN Peacekeeper. However, the UN Peacekeepers face surmountable challenges that undermine their potential and capabilities to carry out their mission. Sustaining successful Peacekeeping Operations is an ongoing process that necessitates continuous policy reviews and revisions. The evolving nature of conflict and security dynamics in UN Mission Zones underscores the need for adaptable and dynamic peacekeeping training modules. A static approach may not serve the purpose of achieving the desired results.

The journey from the Brahimi Report to the Capstone Doctrine to the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) reflects a persistent effort to enhance UN Peacekeeping Operations and ensure the safety and security of the blue helmets. Armed Forces often play a central role in the success of Peacekeeping Operations, acting as a backbone. Today's peacekeeping extends beyond maintaining peace alone; it involves effective administration. Peacekeepers assume diverse roles as administrators, economists, police officers, legal experts, mine clearers, election observers, human rights observers, civil and governance specialists, and more. Specialized training from dedicated UN-qualified peacekeeping departments is essential for peacekeepers to acquire the qualifications needed for these multifaceted roles.

In the realm of UN Peacekeeping Operations, the adage 'means justify ends' holds significance, emphasizing the dedication, commitment, and preparedness required to fulfill the mission's objectives. The complex and challenging nature of peacekeeping underscores the ongoing need for innovation, adaptability, and a holistic approach to training and policy development.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

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Examining Pakistan's Relationship with Religious Minorities: A Case Study of the Christian Community

NUST Journal of International Peace & Stability
2024, Vol. 7(1) Pages 80-94



njips.nust.edu.pk

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.37540/njips.v7i1.163>

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Abstract

The constitution of Pakistan asserts the principle of equal citizenship regardless of religious distinctions and commits to safeguarding minority groups. The subject of religious minorities in Pakistan is framed within the ambit of socio-political and historical trajectories that substantiate their marginalized status. Nevertheless, the dynamics of the relationship between religious minorities and the state, particularly concerning equal citizenship, have not been extensively examined. Based on 26 comprehensive interviews with members of the Lahore Christian community, this study aims to elucidate the meaning of citizenship understood by people situated at the margins of society. While drawing inferences from the theory of *intersectionality*, which underscores how various forms of oppression can intersect and exacerbate disadvantage and discrimination, the study suggests that Christian communities occupy a distinct place in the spectrum of citizenship. This positioning is attributed to their profound sense of distinctiveness, stemming from their unique religious identity.

Keywords

Religion, Minorities, Identity, Christians, Citizenship, Pakistan

Introduction

While there is no universally accepted definition of 'minority,' a practical definition considers a numerically smaller, non-dominant group distinguished by shared ethnic, racial, religious, or linguistic attributes (e.g., Hannum, 1990). The concept of a 'minority' varies in different contexts and is often subject to interpretation based on a country's specific socio-political, legal, and cultural settings. Francesco Capotorti, the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Sub-Commission on the 'Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities', defined a minority (in 1977) as a group that is numerically smaller than the rest of a state's population and in a non-dominant

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Received 03 April 2023; **Revised** 06 October 2023; **Accepted** 06 October 2023; **Published online** 31 January 2024

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position. Members of this group, being nationals of the state, have ethnic, religious, or linguistic features distinct from the majority. They also, at least implicitly, exhibit a sense of solidarity aimed at preserving their culture, traditions, religion, or language (Barsh, 1989). The treatment of minorities by the state has been a prominent issue in international human rights discussions, particularly in the context of democratic governance. The protection of minorities is not only a matter of concern in domestic law but also in international law, as the key challenges involve exclusion, discrimination, and the denial of minorities' identities (Alam, 2015).

Balibar (1988) highlighted a dual tendency in interpreting the concept of citizenship. On one hand, there is a trend to emphasize a specific definition, such as equating citizenship with nationality. On the other hand, some view citizenship merely as a 'legal fiction,' a façade that conceals underlying power structures. This perspective reduces citizenship to nothing more than an instrument of domination. Balibar argued that both tendencies overlook the dynamic nature and essential fluidity of the concept of 'citizen' and its relationship to the state.

Weaving the discourse on citizenship and rights of marginalized groups, Lister (1997) maintained that the ability of certain groups to act as citizens and the extent to which they enjoy both formal and substantive rights are contingent upon where they stand on the continuum of inclusion and exclusion that represent two sides of the citizenship coin. The inadequacy of citizenship rights in meeting the needs of socially and economically marginalized groups has been a topic of discussion among radical leftists and feminist critics. Therefore, the relationship between minorities and the state should be examined from two perspectives: the ideological dimension, which focuses on an individual's identification with the state in terms of inclusivity, and the material dimension, which addresses the capacity of marginalized groups to access economic and political resources (Higgins, 1984).

Reflecting on the multiple marginalities of Christians in Pakistan, including poor class, low caste, subservient gender (in the case of women), and minority religion, several research studies have well-substantiated the socio-economic and politico-religious marginality of religious minorities in Pakistan (Beall, 2006; O'Brien, 2012; Gregory, 2012; Raina, 2014; Amjad-Ali, 2015; Butt, 2019). However, there has been limited focus on examining the dynamics between the working classes from these religious minorities and the state, particularly from the standpoint of citizenship. Addressing this gap, this study explores various vital questions, such as how members of religious minorities perceive their relationship with the state and what citizenship means to this marginalized group positioned at society's fringes. The study also seeks to understand their concept of nationalism, whether minorities feel integrated into or excluded from the larger community, the role of Christian political representatives in the parliament, and how the state responds to the grievances and concerns of religious minorities.

In Pakistan, where Muslims constitute 96.28% of the total population of approximately 207 million, the country is also home to religious minorities. These include Hindus, Christians, Ahmadis, and scheduled castes (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017). The Constitution of Pakistan, through *Article 260*, defines religious minorities as non-Muslims. Furthermore, *Article 36* mandates that the State is responsible for protecting the legitimate rights and interests of these minorities. This includes ensuring their appropriate representation in Federal and Provincial services.

Christians and Hindus in Pakistan, marked by their distinct ethnic identities, are primarily concentrated in the Punjab and Sindh Provinces, respectively. According

to the 2017 census of Pakistan, Christians account for 2.3% of Punjab's total population of 100 million, while Hindus constitute 6.51% of Sindh's 47 million inhabitants (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017). A significant number of Christians reside in central districts of Punjab, predominantly in Lahore, Karachi, and Faisalabad, as well as in some rural areas of the province. Many Christians in these regions, particularly those from lower-income backgrounds, are employed in agriculture, brick kilns, and sanitation services.

A study by Gill and Aqeel (2023) highlights the prevalence of Christians in sanitation work in Punjab, especially in Lahore. Despite Christians comprising less than 5% of Lahore's population, they represent over 80% of its sanitation workforce. For example, the Water and Sanitation Authority employs 2,240 sanitation workers, of whom 1,609 are Christian. Similarly, the Lahore Waste Management Company employs 9,000 sweepers, all Christian. This data underscores the significant presence of Christians in these sectors and points to broader socio-economic dynamics within these communities.

A few empirical studies were carried out on caste-based discrimination in Pakistan informing the prevalence of social exclusion and humiliation experienced by low-caste Christians in Pakistan (Aqeel, 2015; Patras, 2020; Jodhka & Shah, 2010; Gazdar, 2007; Beall, 1997; O'Brien, 2012). Sara Singha (2022) argued that Caste in Pakistan is integrally connected to the Dalit conversions to Protestant Christianity in the mid-1930s, and due to these conversions, many people in Pakistan associated Christianity with Dalit; therefore, low caste associations in addition to poor economic factors resulted in many forms of persecution and exclusion for specific Christian communities in Pakistan.

Methodology

The current study is positioned in the qualitative domain, relying on an interpretative approach and epistemological stance for data collection and analysis of research findings. It highlights the importance of eliciting data from the margins within the social research paradigm. This study asserts that social meaning is closely tied to the experienced material conditions of a group. The argument maintains that social realities are shaped by the perceptions of the involved actors, who internalize the meaning of systems and operate within their perceived domain. Interpretivists excel in elucidating the systems that evolve, generate, and persist through fluid social interactions among group members within a specific social context (Mason, 2002). In examining women, this paper also employs gender as an analytical category. The feminist school of thought validates women's personal encounters as a valuable source of knowledge, asserting that both ordinary and extraordinary events warrant critical reflection, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the world (Campbell & Wasco, 2000).

Christians, constituting nearly 5 percent of Lahore's total population, were chosen as the focal point for this case study. The snowball sampling technique was employed to select interviewees from the working-class Christian community in Lahore. Leveraging the author's 14 years of professional experience in a church-based charity organization, rapport with the study participants was established. The familiarity stemming from the Christian identity proved advantageous in navigating sensitive questions about their experiences of discrimination, fostering an environment where participants felt comfortable sharing their perspectives with a co-religionist rather than an outsider. Repeatedly, participants expressed a sentiment about this study, stating, "[...] sister belongs to our community; therefore, we can openly talk with her."

Throughout the data collection process, a heightened awareness of critical self-scrutiny was maintained to minimize the introduction of self-biases and ensure the application of epistemological reflectivity.

In-depth interviews served as the primary research tool, and they were conducted with 15 women and 12 men from an impoverished Christian settlement in Lahore. The participants represented diverse occupations, with thirteen engaged in sweeping, two working as self-employed beauticians, three as office assistants, two as church leaders, two as members of Provincial Assemblies, three as community/social workers, one as a nurse, and one as a college student. These research participants reside in impoverished Christian slums in Lahore, raising questions about the self-imposed isolation within their community. Despite a substantial number of Christians providing sanitation services to the city, they grapple with discrimination and indignity associated with their cleaning work. Open-ended questions were posed, exploring topics such as why Christians opt to live among co-religionists, experiences of discrimination when interacting with the majority community, perceptions of citizenship and nationalism, feelings of being equal citizens of Pakistan, relationships with political representatives in reserved parliamentary seats, and benefits from state social welfare programs.

This study relied on theoretical insights drawn from the framework of intersectionality, rooted in the black feminist school of thought, and allowing for an understanding of identity politics at the intersections of race, gender, and other identity categories. Coined by Crenshaw (1997), the term *intersectionality* elucidates the exclusion of black women from white women's discourse, highlighting that social category are not interdependent and mutually constitutive, thereby explaining unequal outcomes. Methodological nuances were informed by the feminist standpoint and postmodern postulations, emphasizing the importance of listening to voices from the margins to discern the goals and aspirations of Third World women. This approach aids in constructing strategies for improving women's lives (Kirsch & Kirsch, 1999).

This study specifically addresses the discrimination faced by the Christian working classes engaged in sanitation. The investigation aims to analyze the situated knowledge of individuals in a context where class, caste, and sexism may intersect, leading to multiple sources of oppression that hinder social progress. Social inequalities, exclusion, and economic deprivation significantly influence the behaviors and attitudes of those who feel deprived. This study explores whether individuals experiencing deprivation or discrimination have internalized these phenomena, potentially giving up the struggle for social change, or if they aspire to challenge and overcome the shackles of deprivation for a better future, particularly for their children. Extracting responses from the subaltern community contributes to analyzing self-perceived and internalized discrimination, narrowing the possibilities for sustained efforts toward social change and reinforcing a sense of victimhood.

Eclipsed Citizenship

Since the inception of the newly formed state of Pakistan, religion has evolved as a fundamental component of the collective national identity. However, considering equal citizenship was overlooked during the formulation of this national identity, leading to implications for both minority groups and society (Hisam & Qureshi, 2013). The foundational principle of equal citizenship, enshrined in Article 25 of the constitution, which unequivocally asserts equality for all citizens irrespective of differences in religion, sex, class, and creed, becomes obscured by the provisions delineated in *Articles 41* and *92*. These constitutional articles disqualify non-Muslims from holding

the positions of President and Prime Minister. O'Brien (2012) argued that the 1949 'Objective Resolution', designating Pakistan as an Islamic state, laid the groundwork for the legal categorization of Pakistani citizenry into Muslims and non-Muslims.

Highlighting the institutionalization of Islam within the State apparatus, Saigol (2013) observed that numerous laws and policies ostensibly framed in the name of religion in Pakistan had a detrimental impact on the rights of women, as well as religious and ethnic minorities. In alignment with this perspective, Shaheed (2010) remarked that the politically motivated use of Islam reached its zenith during the regime of General Zia (1977-88), whose policies undermined equality for female and non-Muslim citizens.

Kamran and Purewal (2015) asserted that the dichotomy between Muslims and non-Muslims was officially institutionalized through the state's incorporation of religious categorization in the Constitution of Pakistan. This categorization has had a lasting impact on the discourse surrounding minorities in Pakistan, labeling them as 'others' or 'deviant.'

The identification of a religious minority in Pakistan with equal citizenship also does not align with the understanding of the marginalized Christian community, as reflected in the words of a woman sweeper: "[...] I do not know about equal citizenship and rights; what does it mean?" (N.Bibi, personal communication, May 15, 2019, Lahore). However, when asked whether she feels that Muslims and Christians are considered equal by the State, she responded negatively, stating that Christians are viewed as inferior. In response to the same questions, a female nurse offered her perspective.

Christians are not equal to Muslims in Pakistan due to the difference in religion. Pakistan is made for Muslims only; this is what we have studied in our Schools. We face discrimination due to our religious identity (S.Naureen, personal communication, 21 August, Lahore).

The internalized perception of being inferior has led minorities to maintain isolation from the majority community, deepening their alienation from both the state and society. The crystallization of religious identities in Pakistan through state narratives that privilege Islamic identity has further undermined the potential for inclusive citizenship. Such sentiments are expressed in the words of a woman lawyer (M.Gill, personal communication, February 10, 2019, Lahore):

We are Pakistanis, but some Muslims think that we are different because of our religious identity. Our national loyalty towards the state is also underestimated. Muslims believe that we are more loyal to the Christians in the West. Such labeling led Christians to believe that they were other, second class and less significant citizens.

Rais (2007) highlighted that integrating religious minorities into the mainstream poses a significant challenge due to prevailing social prejudices and the classification of citizens along religious lines. Partha Chatterjee argued that by the early twentieth century, although the same rights unrestricted by race, religion, ethnicity, and class were extended to women, it did not result in the abolition of actual distinctions between men (and women) in civil society (Chatterjee, 2004). Similarly, the acknowledgment of the rights of a particular community or group by the state does not

guarantee the elimination of socio-religious distinctions and discrimination. Instead, it necessitates concrete measures by the State to safeguard the rights of religious minorities practically.

As of 2020, the Pakistan government's federal cabinet established a national commission for minorities under the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony. However, this commission appears to lack significant authority, as an act of Parliament did not constitute it and, therefore, lacks statutory powers. Additionally, this commission does not possess legal jurisdiction beyond the capital territory of Islamabad. Linking citizenship and identity, Kabeer (2000) emphasized that violation or denial of the rights of certain groups constrains their application of agency for seeking redressal or challenging exclusion. Situated outside the boundaries of a political society, these marginalized groups do not relate to the state in the same manner as other upper classes or ruling groups maintain their relationship with the State. Furthermore, they remain excluded, having fewer rights and limited political possibilities to seek state entitlements.

Access to Social Welfare Schemes

Kabeer and colleagues (2010) highlighted the inadequacy of state-run social protection schemes in Pakistan in addressing social inequalities based on class, religion, and ethnicity. For instance, the exclusion of religious minorities from benefiting from the State-supported social welfare Zakat fund, which is specifically allocated for Muslims. This policy implemented by the state contributes to divisions among citizens and raises concerns about equal citizenship. A 36-year-old woman narrated her ordeal and how she was stopped from obtaining free medicine on account of her Christian faith (S. Samuel, personal communication, November 11, 2020, Lahore).

I used to get good quality insulin free of cost from the government hospital, but one day, a lady sitting in the hospital saw my documents and said that I was Christian. Therefore, I cannot get free medicines under Zakat funds, which stopped me from taking free insulin.

Additionally, the government of Pakistan has offered another fund known as *Bait-ul-Mal* for rendering financial support to poor people and destitute women, irrespective of religious affiliation. Commenting on the challenges to acquiring funds from the *Bait-ul-Mal*, a male Christian social worker identified the following problem.

It is quite a lengthy and cumbersome process to gain funds from *Bait-ul-Mal*. Illiterate and poor people find it extremely difficult to fill out their application forms, which are available in the English language only. No timeframe for the acceptance of the application is provided to the applicant. Once, I helped a poor woman in my hometown [Khanewal] by filling out her application form. I learned that she has to travel to another city [Multan] to apply. She had no money for travel and failed to pursue her application (S. Francis, personal communication, December 3, 2021, Lahore).

Alongside this, the 2022 report on the Punjab Pre-Budget Consultation, conducted by Sub-National Governance (2022) in collaboration with the Government of Punjab and UK aid in Lahore, acknowledged the exclusion of minorities and widows from targeted social protection programs in the region. The report recommended the

establishment of quotas for women and minorities within initiatives such as *Ehsaas* and other protection schemes.

Special Quota for Religious Minorities

The Government of Pakistan initially introduced a 6% job quota for scheduled castes in government employment through the Scheduled Caste (Declaration) Ordinance of 1957. However, this affirmative action measure faced challenges in implementation and was subsequently withdrawn in the 1990s (Shah, 2007). After a lapse of more than four decades, in 2009, the Government of Pakistan granted a 5% job quota for religious minorities in adherence to the constitutional provision that mandates the state to adopt special measures to safeguard the legitimate interests of minorities, backward, and depressed classes. Reports from various newspapers indicated that minorities have faced challenges in benefiting from this quota, leading to numerous unfilled job positions (Butt, 2019). The Supreme Court has expressed serious concerns regarding over 30,000 vacant job positions designated for minorities in the government employment quota, highlighting that minorities are not recruited following the established quota (Correspondent, 2021). In response to inquiries about why Christians, in particular, have faced challenges in availing benefits from the job quota, A male Christian Member of the Punjab Assembly viewed (H.Gill, personal communication, June 18, 2021, Murree):

Lack of education in the Christian community is a reason for not being able to seek benefits from this state's affirmative action. Second, Government departments usually offer this quota for low-scale jobs in sanitation services, which is already filled by poor Christian sweepers and conveniently avoids uniform application of quota for all tiers of jobs.

Further expanding on this notion, a 28-year-old Christian man who applied for an Operation Theatre Assistant job in a government hospital told his rejection experience during the interview (Z. Masih, personal communication, July 5, 2021, Lahore):

I have cleared the test for the job and appeared for a final interview. The interviewer panel told me that this quota was only available for the sweeper job and offered me to join as a sweeper. I insisted that I had applied for another job and passed the test, but they refused to listen.

Since 2012, the National Lobbying Delegation (NLD) for religious minorities in Pakistan, comprising 24 social and political activists representing Hindu, Scheduled Caste, Christian, and Sikh communities, has been actively engaging with state officials, including parliamentarians, bureaucrats, and policymakers, to address the challenges faced by their respective communities. The delegation has consistently raised concerns related to the non-implementation of job quotas, reservation of seats in higher education institutes, and proposed amendments to the personal laws affecting religious minorities (Radio Pakistan, 2021). Notably, in 2020 and 2021, two Provincial Governments, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, they respectively, allocated a 2% quota for students belonging to religious minorities in higher education.

Possibility of Electoral Politics

In 1984, the military President, General Zia-ul Haq, introduced a separate electorate system for religious minorities. This system limited their ability to elect representatives solely to national or provincial tickets, effectively segregating them from participating in the general voting process or contesting in general elections (Sultana, 2014). Consequently, minorities lost the opportunity for political participation in their districts, and Muslim politicians often neglect religious minority concerns in their constituencies due to the latter's lack of political leverage to influence local politics. Elections in 1985, 1988, 1990, 1993, and 1997 were conducted on separate electorates, leading to the prolonged political exclusion of minorities from mainstream politics. Recognizing the adverse effects on political participation, Christian leaders and political activists advocated for the abolition of separate electorates and called for the restoration of joint electorates. This longstanding demand of the Christian community resonated with the then-military president, General Pervaiz Musharraf, in 2002. Introducing universal enfranchisement for minorities marked a progressive step, enabling their equal participation in political processes.

Article 51(2A) of the Constitution of Pakistan designates ten reserved seats for religious minorities allocated to political parties in proportion to the seats won by these parties in the National Assembly. The politics surrounding these reserved seats are further complicated by political anomalies arising from the absence of any provision or procedure for direct and indirect elections on reserved seats within the political party structure. Consequently, Christian politicians nominated for reserved seats need more political support from their community, and their tenure is subject to the party leadership's discretion. Asif Aqeel, a Christian researcher, contends that minority representatives appointed to these reserved seats are handpicked and function as rubber stamps, primarily oriented towards appeasing their party heads rather than effectively serving the interests of the minority communities (Aqeel, 2020). This perspective is further corroborated by Ajay Raina, who asserts that the institutionalized Christian presence in politics has often been sub-proportionate, lacking in authority and influence, and tends to be perfunctory (Raina, 2014).

Legal Protection for Minorities

The century-old personal laws governing religious minorities, exemplified by statutes like the *Christian Divorce Law of 1869* and the *Christian Marriage Law of 1872*, exhibit legal anomalies that necessitate amendments to align with evolving local contextual needs and principles of gender equality. For instance, the *Christian Divorce Law* permits divorce solely on the grounds of adultery, a condition that proves exceedingly challenging to substantiate in a court of law. A female lawyer elaborated on this issue:

Due to the problematic nature of the law, Christians prefer not to seek any judicial remedy in the event of the breakdown of marriages that becomes quite disadvantageous for weaker partners, especially women in difficult marriages.

The formulation of the *Hindu Marriage Act* and *Punjab Sikh and Marriages Act* in 2017 and 2018 marked commendable initiatives by Pakistan's government. However, the rules of procedures governing these laws have yet to be established, rendering these legislative measures non-implementable. The absence of procedural frameworks for these laws has left personal matters related to marriage, divorce,

maintenance, and child custody without legal protection. Consequently, the lives of minorities are currently governed by patriarchal cultural norms and illicit practices due to the lack of legal safeguards in these crucial aspects of personal law.

Exclusion through Education

Multiple studies, including those by Lall (2007), Raiz (2010), Winthrop and Graff (2010), Nayyar and Salim (2005), and Dean (2005), collectively demonstrate the presence of biased material targeting religious minorities in school textbooks. Such content is recognized as contributing to promoting negative attitudes toward different religious beliefs.

Saigol's (2013) analysis of school textbooks in Pakistan emphasizes that religion is portrayed as a defining characteristic of good citizenship in the country. Consequently, the discourse of citizenship, integral to modern state formation, is appropriated by religion, particularly Islam, effectively excluding non-Muslims. Saigol further argued that government-approved textbooks consistently reinforce the notion that being a Pakistani is synonymous with being a Muslim (Razzaq, 2022).

This portrayal contributes to a sense of alienation and isolation among students from minority communities who find themselves perceived as different or "others." Moreover, these textbooks notably lack mentions of prominent non-Muslim heroes or role models, thereby constraining the educational scope for promoting religious diversity.

Article 22 of the Constitution of Pakistan explicitly states that no person attending an educational institute shall be compelled to receive religious instruction other than their own. However, in practice, minority students often lack alternative options for receiving their religious education and consequently find themselves studying ethics instead of Islamiyat.

A noteworthy development occurred on August 31, 2023, when the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training approved the 'Religious Education Curriculum 2022'. This curriculum is designed to encompass the teachings of seven different religions and is intended for implementation across all public and private institutions. To ensure the effectiveness of this initiative, provincial governments must follow suit and endorse the adoption of the Religious Education Curriculum 2022 in their respective regions.

This step aligns with the constitutional mandate of providing religious freedom to all individuals. It signifies a move towards fostering inclusivity and acknowledging the diverse religious fabric within the country's educational landscape. Further monitoring and collaborative efforts between federal and provincial authorities are essential to ensure the successful integration of this curriculum and uphold the principles of religious freedom as outlined in the constitution.

Living in Ghettos

Cullen and Pretes (2000) argued that socially constructed determinants of marginality, such as gender, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, occupation, or language, may often lead to the spatial marginalization of certain groups who prefer to live in enclaves and ghettos and experience exclusion from accessing the privileged social spaces. While describing various dimensions of poverty, such as deprivations and capability failures, Amartya Sen demonstrated that social exclusion from social relations has a conceptual link with poverty (Sen, 2000). Aqeel and Gill (2023) argued that societal and political segregation across religious lines has resulted in ghettoized neighbourhoods populated

by religious minorities from *Dalit* backgrounds, and in addition to having second-class citizenship, certain minorities experience social exclusion based on their downtrodden caste identities.

In Lahore, Christians often reside in closely-knit, impoverished slums, where they demonstrate a preference for living alongside their co-religionists rather than experiencing potential discomfort in mingling and integrating with the predominantly Muslim majority. This sentiment is articulated by individuals such as Rafique, a male sweeper who has worked for the last 25 years.

Rafique's perspective sheds light on Christians' comfort in living within a *baradari* (a community of shared religious faith). He emphasizes the ease with which they can celebrate their religious festivals, thanks to the support of their Christian brothers and sisters. Rafique suggests this sense of freedom might be compromised if they reside in Muslim neighbourhoods (R. Masih, personal communication, December 22, 2021).

This observation hints at the complex dynamics of community living, where shared religious identity often provides a sense of security and communal support. It also reflects the challenges or perceived discomfort that some Christians may associate with integration into Muslim-majority neighbourhoods. A female nurse highlighted her difficulties while searching for a rented apartment. She cited an incident during the interview where the Muslim owner initially agreed to rent his house but later withdrew the offer upon learning about her Christian faith. This discriminatory experience left her with no alternative but to seek housing in a Christian locality.

Similarly, a 20-year-old female student shared her distressing experience with the author while looking for a hostel in Lahore (J. Masih, personal communication, August 16, 2022) personal communication. Despite securing a private rented room in an apartment, the situation took a turn when the apartment manager informed her that the owner discovered her Christian identity through her ID card. Consequently, she was asked to vacate the premises despite signing a year-long contract. This unfortunate incident compelled her to relocate to a friend's home for shelter hastily.

These anecdotes shed light on the religious biases that some individuals face in securing housing, emphasizing the impact of discriminatory practices on Christians seeking accommodation in certain areas. Such instances underscore the need for broader awareness and efforts to address issues related to religious discrimination in housing.

Encountering discrimination in social interactions due to a marginalized religious identity not only generates stress within minority communities but also serves as a persistent reminder of their perceived lesser significance within the majority community. As Balibar (1998) noted, the formal acknowledgment of citizenship does not necessarily translate into genuine equality. He highlights the contradiction between the formal autonomy granted by citizenship and the practical, subordinated status experienced by certain groups.

In the case of Christians in Pakistan, despite holding formal citizenship status, they grapple with numerous challenges when attempting to access social, cultural, and political rights on par with their fellow citizens. This discrepancy underscores the disparity between the ideal of equal citizenship and the realities faced by minorities, emphasizing the need for broader societal recognition and rectification of systemic inequalities.

Gender-based Marginalization

The concept of intersectionality illuminates the diverse experiences of women within society and the state, acknowledging that their positions are unique and specific. For Christian women, apart from facing discrimination based on religion and class, they confront an additional layer of bias stemming from gender inequalities ingrained in the socio-cultural fabric.

Female Christian sweepers, for example, often find themselves working in public spaces where they encounter difficulties. According to accounts provided by some women in this profession, they frequently face derogatory remarks. Some of the Christian women also recount incidents of religious discrimination in professional settings. A Christian nurse serving as a Head Tutor faced ridicule and derogatory comments from subordinates upon her promotion. These narratives underscore the multifaceted challenges that Christian women in Pakistan navigate, shaped by the intricate intersections of religion, class, and gender biases within society.

Low Caste Group Identity

An overwhelming majority of Christians in Punjab trace their historical lineage to downtrodden outcaste groups, who underwent mass religious conversions to Christianity from the 1870s to the 1920s under the influence of Western missionaries in the Indian sub-continent (Amjad-Ali, 2015; O'Brien, 2012; Streefland, 1973). This large-scale conversion, documented in Christian missionary reports as 'The Chuhra Movement' (Pickett, 1933), involved individuals from the Chuhras, who, under the Brahmanic caste system, were assigned degrading and dehumanizing tasks such as handling dead animals, cleaning excreta in villages, executing criminals, and skinning deceased animals (Stock & Stock, 1975).

Jo Beall observed that janitorial workers and sweepers in Pakistan, a substantial portion of whom are Christians, are interchangeably referred to by their caste name, Chuhra (as well as Jamadars) (Beall, 1997). The term 'Chura' is a commonly used epithet and derogatory stereotype for Christians in Pakistan. Despite the official discourse of the state denying the existence of caste-based on the egalitarian ethos of Islam, caste-like relations persist in governing social, political, and cultural realities. Stories of religious and caste-based discrimination faced by Christian sweepers are not uncommon.

Many Christians in Pakistan also hold occupations such as doctors, teachers, nurses, and business entrepreneurs; however, the predominant hereditary cleaning occupation within the Christian community persists. As of November 2018, over 80 percent of sweepers in Lahore employed by entities such as the Water and Sanitation Authority, Public Health Department Punjab, School Education Department Punjab, and Lahore Waste Management Company are Christians (Patras, 2020). This dual experience of caste-based discrimination alongside a distinct religious identity places Christians in a state of double oppression. The devaluation and discrimination against their identity impede the marginalized group's rightful access to essential facilities for their everyday livelihood. O'Brien (2012) noted that the internalization of oppression often leads to a sense of shame becoming central to self-image, self-hatred, and self-derogation.

The global narrative surrounding religious minorities, particularly Christians in Pakistan, often emphasizes a victimhood perspective, highlighting their experiences of religious discrimination while paying limited attention to their low-caste identity. Local Christian NGOs tend to frame the challenges faced by Christians primarily

through the lens of religious discrimination, and the inflow of foreign aid is often contingent on this narrative. Institutional Churches in Pakistan, heirs to imperial infrastructures evident in grand edifices like Cathedrals and institutions established by Western missionaries, consistently underscore the religious identity of Christians while deliberately downplaying their low-caste ancestral roots. This deliberate denial and disconnect serve to overshadow the struggles of a significant majority of impoverished Christians engaged in their hereditary occupation of menial work.

The state's persistent otherization of religious minorities contributes to the creation of boundaries among citizens where the religious identity of the Christian minority aligns with their low-caste status, effectively concealing the multifaceted marginalities experienced by the poor-class Christian population in Pakistan.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the amalgamation of various marginalized identities is solidified and perpetuated through daily encounters with discrimination and disadvantages. These experiences hinder the development of inclusive citizenship, eclipsing the relationship between the State and the marginalized communities. The study emphasizes the imperative use of an intersectional lens when analyzing the lived experiences of individuals shaped by social divisions arising from caste, class, gender, and religion.

The challenges faced by religious minorities in their daily lives necessitate the establishment of a robust redressal mechanism by the state. State-led initiatives aimed at uplifting religious minorities, such as the allocation of separate quotas in education and employment, must be effectively translated into tangible outcomes. In selecting minority candidates for reserved seats in the parliament, political parties should implement fair and transparent mechanisms to ensure democratic principles and equal opportunities for political activists within the Christian community. Additionally, the State should not solely rely on religious clergy, claiming to represent minorities, as the exclusive voice or mediators in determining their relationship with the broader minority population. The engagement of the Christian clergy with the state within the confines of a doctrinal religious framework narrows the potential for exercising inclusive political agency.

The unaddressed demands and grievances of religious minorities, encompassing issues such as eliminating religious discrimination from school textbooks, amending personal laws, safeguarding workplaces, and ensuring protection from vigilante mob violence targeting impoverished residents of religious minorities, position these communities within an exclusionary terrain of citizenship.

Conflict of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

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Al-Qaeda Amidst the Second Afghan Taliban Regime

NUST Journal of International Peace & Stability
2024, Vol. 7(1) Pages 95-98



njips.nust.edu.pk

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.37540/njips.v7i1.162>

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Introduction

The unexpected resurgence of the Afghan Taliban in August 2021, culminating in the swift dissolution of the Afghan national government within a two-month timeframe, led to novel security threats for the region. The dynamic shift paved the way for the establishment of the Second Afghan Taliban regime. In their first regime (1996-2001), the Afghan Taliban ruled over most of Afghanistan; their rule was brought to an end with the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent US-led invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001, beginning with ‘Operation Enduring Freedom.’

The Afghan Taliban consolidated their reign while defeating the National Resistance Front (NRF) forces in September 2021 (Siddiqui & Ibrahim, 2021). This victory cemented the Second Taliban regime covering all of Afghanistan. Consequently, this Afghan Taliban regime appears more robust and formidable in terms of control over Afghan territories and keeping in view the strength and resources captured from the arsenal of former Afghan National and Defense Security Forces. Though initial predictions painted a bleak picture of the Afghan Taliban government's stability, citing economic woes and potential unrest, its continued presence remains undeniable. It seems that presently, the Afghan Taliban regime does not face any challenges as far as security matters are concerned and would likely continue their rule. However, the strengthening of Afghan Taliban rule may provide Al-Qaeda with a conducive environment for its resurrection, creating challenges for the regime.

Al-Qaeda—Taliban Relations

It is noteworthy that neither Al-Qaeda nor the Afghan Taliban have ever issued condemnations or expressed disagreement regarding each other's modus operandi. Al-Qaeda, along with the Pakistani Taliban group Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), has been operating in coordination since the initiation of the Global War on Terror (GWOT). They have mutually provided safe havens in their respective control areas, demonstrating collaboration. Moreover, relations among the Afghan Taliban, TTP, and Al-Qaeda have remained strong and symbiotic over the years and are still ‘tightly bonded and unlikely to dissipate’ (Roggio, 2023).

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In contrast to the Islamic State-Khorasan, a splinter group of Al-Qaeda, which is determined to combat the Afghan Taliban, Al-Qaeda has adopted a distinct strategy. It has chosen a supportive role in tandem with the Afghan Taliban, displaying a wise approach. In this manner, the Al-Qaeda played an intelligent strategy. It allowed itself room for further reinvigoration and redeemed Afghan Taliban trust. Now, the Afghan Taliban are back in power, and Al-Qaeda would likely take advantage of such a favorable environment.

Al-Qaeda's Resurgence in Afghanistan

Even before the fall of Kabul, there were strong indications of an unceasing strong bond between Al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban. The UN Taliban Sanctions Monitoring Team had warned about the ties between Taliban and Al-Qaeda and that Al-Qaeda continued to operate in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and its ranks and files fought alongside Afghan Taliban. The new approach of Al-Qaeda was termed as 'strategic patience,' as the global Islamist terrorist entity wanted to secure time in order to preserve itself before the US withdrawal to resume its international terrorist schemes (Intel Brief: "I Can't Quit You Baby," 2021).

The Doha Peace Accord mentioned the ouster of foreign terrorist organizations from Afghanistan and that Afghan soil would not be allowed to be used for providing safe havens to international terrorist organizations (Bass, 2020). The Afghan Taliban seems to be failing to uphold their commitments. Immediately after the Taliban takeover, Al-Qaeda started to relocate itself back to Afghanistan. The Al-Qaeda Emir Dr Ayman al-Zawahiri had appeared in and released eight videos after the fall of Kabul to the Afghan Taliban. Al-Qaeda's media wing, the As-Sahab Media, had suddenly become active and released several videos depicting the state of affairs of Muslims in South Asia.

Al-Qaeda was quick to renew its allegiance to Afghan Taliban Emir Mullah Haibatullah as Emir ul Momineen just one day after the Afghan Taliban takeover of Kabul in August 2021. In the February 2022 edition of Al-Qaeda magazine Ummah Waahidah, Al-Qaeda advised the Afghan Taliban to boost itself as a regional power, and Al-Qaeda vowed to carry out terrorist attacks against Western countries (2022 UN Afghanistan Annual Results Report, 2023).

The Rise of AQIS in Taliban-Controlled Afghanistan

Taliban-ruled Afghanistan serves as a host for Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) and various other Al-Qaeda-affiliated Islamist terrorist organizations. AQIS, Al-Qaeda's regional franchise, has not executed a terrorist attack since 2016. Instead, it has relocated to Afghanistan and actively participated in the insurgency led by the Afghan Taliban against both the US and Afghan forces. The AQIS Emir Asim Omar was killed in the Musa Kila district of Helmand province in a joint operation by Afghan and US forces. He was killed along with six other AQIS militants in an Afghan Taliban compound, depicting that he and his colleagues were fighting alongside the Afghan Taliban and were embedded with the Afghan Taliban (Hamid, 2019).

The Al-Qaeda footprint was getting visible by mid-2022. According to a UN report, the AQIS has an estimated number of 180 to 400 fighters from India, Pakistan, Myanmar, and Bangladesh, and it is difficult to distinguish them from the Afghan Taliban as they had been fighting alongside them for years in Ghazni, Helmand, Kandahar, Nimruz, Paktika, and Zabul provinces. Osama Mahmood and Atif Yahya Ghouri lead the AQIS as its deputy; other operational commanders include Salahuddin,

Azzam, Qari Tufail, and Ahsan Bilal Waqar. The US forces found a sprawling Al-Qaeda training complex in Shorabak district in October 2015, which was indeed an AQIS property and significantly weakened AQIS training activities in Afghanistan. AQIS also regularly published its magazine *Nawa e Afghan Jihad* and later changed its name to *Nawa-e-Ghazah e Hind* (Thirteenth Report of the Analytical Support, 2022).

After Zawahiri: A New Leadership in the Making

In July 2022, almost one year after the Taliban takeover of Kabul, Al-Qaeda Emir Dr Ayman al-Zawahiri was killed in a US drone strike in Kabul (Liptak et al., 2022). He was residing in an affluent locality of Kabul. That was perhaps the most glaring example of the Afghan Taliban's betrayal of the Doha Peace Accord and showcases the Taliban's resolve to keep hosting Al-Qaeda and other foreign Islamist terrorist organizations in Afghanistan.

Several senior Al-Qaeda leaders previously incarcerated in Afghan prisons under the Afghan government were also set free by the Afghan Taliban. Most important among them was Abu Ikhlas al-Masri, linked to Katiba Umer Farooq (aka the Red Unit). Al-Masri was instrumental in activating and leading Al-Qaeda in Kunar province but was arrested by Afghan security forces in 2008 and since then has been incarcerated (Roggio & Weiss, 2023).

Another breaking news concerning Al-Qaeda was the return of Dr Amin ul Haq, a high-profile Al-Qaeda senior leader who returned to his native Nangarhar province in August 2021 after years of lying low. Amin was close to Bin Laden and worked alongside him during the 1980s when Abdullah Azzam led *Maktab al-Khidmat wal Mujahedeen al-Arabiya* from Peshawar. Amin has close links with the Afghan Taliban and is considered one of the senior-most non-Arab Al-Qaeda leaders. Amin was influential in Afghan Jihad and thus contributed to inviting Bin Laden to Afghanistan back in 1994. His name is enlisted in the UN sanctions committee list as one of 39 terrorists affiliated with the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Harmouch, 2022).

Conclusion

Despite experiencing a revival under the second Taliban regime, Al-Qaeda is confronted with various challenges, with a prominent issue of the leadership crisis, especially in the post-Zawahiri scenario. Also, it is not clear whether Saif al-Adl, the leading candidate for the Al-Qaeda Emir slot, has moved to Afghanistan from Iran. Several reports have indicated the growing Al-Qaeda presence in the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, and they manage to maintain a symbiotic relationship. For Al-Qaeda, Afghanistan has once again become a safe haven after the departure of US troops. On the other hand, the Afghan Taliban, keeping up their past traditions, have once again provided them sanctuaries. The robust relationship between the two groups persists, grounded in shared violent ideologies and mutual support during challenging times. Apart from that, Al-Qaeda has repeatedly pledged allegiance to the Afghan Taliban, and that technically made Al-Qaeda part and parcel of the broader Taliban network. Therefore, dismissing the notion of the Afghan Taliban abandoning Al-Qaeda is unwarranted. Considering Al-Qaeda's demonstrated patience, it is reasonable to assume that the resumption of terrorist activities is merely a matter of time.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

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Empowering Women and Children: Pakistan Army Female Engagement Team's Vital Role in UN Peacekeeping

NUST Journal of International Peace & Stability
2024, Vol. 7(1) Pages 99-103



njips.nust.edu.pk

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.37540/njips.v7i1.167>

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Introduction

In the aftermath of the Cold War, the global stage has witnessed numerous conflicts that underscore the vital importance of international peace and security. Most of the violent confrontations faced by the international community during this post-Cold War era did not ascend from power dynamics among states but rather emanated from nations dealing with structural inequalities, religious or ethnic tensions, and governance shortcomings.

The United Nations (UN) utilizes peacekeeping as an effective tool to extend aid to countries navigating the complexities of transitioning from conflict to peace. As the UN Department of Peace Operations (UNDPO) outlines, peacekeeping involves creating conditions conducive to lasting peace. Within the realm of the UN, which is comprised of nation-state governments and organizations, there is a shared understanding that peacekeepers at the international level are tasked with monitoring and observing peace processes in post-conflict regions. They may also assist ex-combatants in fulfilling commitments outlined in peace agreements, offering support in various forms, including confidence-building measures, power-sharing arrangements, electoral support, reinforcement of the rule of law, and initiatives for economic and social development (Koops et al., 2015)

The UN is dedicated to sustaining global harmony, peace, and security, fostering friendly relations among nations for international cooperation. Pakistan, a member since September 1947, actively engages in UN initiatives, holding the status of a charter member and participating in specialized agencies. Notably, Pakistan stands out as one of the largest contributors of troops to UN peacekeeping missions, reflecting its steadfast commitment to international peace and security. The nation's inaugural troop deployment occurred in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in 1960, marking the beginning of a six-decade-long involvement in 46 peacekeeping missions

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across 23 countries (Imran et al., 2023). Despite tragic losses, with 171 Pakistani peacekeepers making the ultimate sacrifice, Pakistan takes great pride in its sustained contributions (Pakistan Mission to the United Nations, 2023).

Role of Female Peacekeepers in Conflict Resolution

Female peacekeepers play a crucial role in providing vital assistance in conflict and post-conflict settings, highlighting the nation's esteem for the invaluable contributions of the 'Blue Helmets' in preserving security and stability worldwide. Throughout history, women, in more significant proportion than men, have played pivotal roles on the ground in formulating conflict initiatives to implement peace agreements, necessitating their foundational involvement in the peacebuilding process (Owuor, 2021). Women exhibit adept negotiation skills in peacebuilding, demonstrating proficiency in resolving issues spanning diverse ethnic, religious, political, and cultural divides. Social science research indicates that women are more predisposed to engaging in dialogues and compromise, collaborating with communities to establish avenues for reconciliation.

Over the last two decades, UN peace operations have made notable strides in advancing the principles of gender mainstreaming and equality. Despite these advancements, there is an ongoing imperative not only to acknowledge but also to surpass the foundational objectives that underpin the integration of women in uniform within peacekeeping missions. This process requires thoroughly comprehending the barriers and unrealistic expectations women in uniform may encounter.

Achieving true gender integration involves more than the mere presence of women in peacekeeping forces; it demands a nuanced understanding of the unique challenges they face and a commitment to addressing these hurdles systematically. By delving into the impediments and impractical prospects experienced by women in uniform, the UN can develop targeted strategies and policies that facilitate their meaningful inclusion and success in peacekeeping roles.

By this notion, peacekeeping missions have expanded their mandates to encompass a broader range of activities, including peacebuilding initiatives such as organizing elections, disarming and demobilizing soldiers, security sector reform, upholding the rule of law, promoting good governance, and safeguarding human rights, there has been a parallel effort to integrate gender equality into these operations such that gender balancing and gender mainstreaming have been employed as strategies to address the complexities that arise from these expanded mandates.

The Windhoek Declaration and the Namibia Plan of Action on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations are highlighted as pivotal documents. These documents emphasized the significance of gender mainstreaming and gender balancing in UN peace operations, marking a crucial link between the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda and peacekeeping efforts (Karim, 2018).

Moreover, recognizing that gender inclusivity is an ethical imperative and enhances the overall effectiveness of peacekeeping operations, the UN must continue prioritizing efforts that foster an environment where women can thrive professionally. This involves dismantling systemic biases, providing adequate support systems, and promoting a culture of inclusivity within peacekeeping forces. Only through such

comprehensive measures can the UN truly embody its commitment to gender equality in peace operations.

Pakistan's Inclusive Peacekeeping and Gender Equality

Pakistan's commitment to international cooperation and peacekeeping efforts extends beyond its active engagement in various United Nations agencies, such as UNDP, WFP, WHO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNESCO, and IFAD. This dedication is further highlighted by Pakistan's consistent election to the UN Security Council, often in collaboration with countries like Colombia. The country's involvement in such diverse and specialized UN agencies underscores its multifaceted contributions to various global challenges.

Notably, Pakistan's commitment to peacekeeping goes beyond traditional military involvement. Female peacekeepers from Pakistan play a significant and noteworthy role in UN missions. Their contributions encompass a range of essential activities, from fostering community engagement and empowerment to addressing the specific needs of women and children in conflict zones. These female peacekeepers bring a unique perspective to the peacekeeping landscape, contributing to the establishment of sustainable peace by actively participating in conflict resolution, community building, and humanitarian efforts.

Pakistan's proactive role in peacekeeping operations is not confined to military contributions alone; it extends to fostering inclusivity and diversity within these missions. Female peacekeepers' presence and impactful contributions exemplify the country's emphasis on gender equality. Their involvement not only strengthens the overall effectiveness of UN missions but also sets a positive example for gender inclusivity in traditionally male-dominated fields.

Pakistan's Female Engagement Team and the Case of DRC

To address the pressing concerns surrounding the unique challenges faced by women and children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), a strategic decision was made to deploy a specialized team of well-trained female peacekeepers. This initiative, launched on 31st January 2020, marked a significant milestone as 15 Pakistani lady officers were officially recognized as Pakistan's inaugural Female Engagement Team (FET) in a UN peacekeeping mission named United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in The Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO). This deployment represents a deliberate effort to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of engagement in the DRC by leveraging these trained female peacekeepers' diverse skills and expertise.

The composition of the Pakistani female engagement team is notable for its diversity, with members assuming various roles, such as analysts, professionals, doctors, and more. Their deployment signifies a recognition of the multifaceted challenges present in the DRC and the need for a comprehensive approach that addresses the distinct needs of women and children in conflict zones. By bringing a range of specialized skills to the mission, the team aims to make a meaningful impact on the ground, contributing to the broader goals of peacekeeping operations in the region.

Following the initial deployment, an additional 17 Pakistani lady officers joined the mission on 3 February 2020, further bolstering the strength and capabilities of the female engagement team. This expanded group of skilled professionals adds depth to the mission's capacity to navigate the complexities of peacekeeping, offering a diverse range of expertise to address the multifaceted challenges present in the DRC.

It is worth noting that the commitment of Pakistani women extends beyond the field missions, as they actively contribute to various entities at the UN headquarters. This comprehensive engagement showcases the dedication of Pakistani women to playing a significant role not only in field operations but also in shaping policies and strategies at the international level. The deployment of female peacekeepers is a testament to Pakistan's commitment to fostering gender inclusivity and addressing the specific needs of women and children in conflict zones, reinforcing the country's role as a proactive contributor to global peacekeeping efforts.

Highlighting the pivotal role of female peacekeepers, Governor Theo Ngwabidje recognized the commendable service of the Female Engagement Team (FET) deployed in the DRC on January 4, 2020. Awarded UN Medals for their dedicated contributions to MONUSCO, the FET's significant impact on military and police operations was underscored. Actively engaging with local communities, the FET advocates for human rights and promotes security measures, exemplifying UN principles and contributing significantly to peace and well-being in conflict zones. The author, a member of the Pakistan Army FET selected for the UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC, emphasizes the team's commitment to spreading peace through various community engagement initiatives. They commemorate UN International Days with awareness sessions and demonstrations. The medical professionals within the team excelled in Level-1 hospitals, conducting impactful medical camps and health awareness campaigns. Despite the somber news of a fellow soldier's sacrifice, the ALMARSOOS Battalion honors his memory with a dedicated place within their army premises, fostering unity with the local community on international occasions.

Embarking on long-range patrolling (LRP) marked a distinctive and noteworthy undertaking within the operational endeavors of the FET. This novel endeavor, however, had its inherent challenges, notably the encumbrance of heavy bulletproof vests, helmets, and the carriage of MP5s, which presented significant impediments to mobility and stamina. Notwithstanding the physical exhaustion, the steadfast commitment to supporting the community persisted. Throughout this operation, the FET discerned LRP as an efficacious means to glean intelligence from female and juvenile members of the local community. Simultaneously, it comprehensively assessed their security situation and potential livelihood hazards.

Operationalizing in environments fraught with challenges and hazards, female UN peacekeepers play an indispensable role in furnishing vital assistance to vulnerable individuals entrenched in conflict zones. As integral members of the Female Engagement Team (FET), the author highlights the primary mandate of cultivating trust within the local community, with a particular emphasis on engendering open lines of communication, especially among women. During their patrolling endeavors, the concerted efforts of the FET revolve around the promotion of community well-being, gender equality, and the active involvement of women. Their interventions strategically

address specific challenges confronted by women, with timely communication of pertinent information to contingent commanders, thereby facilitating tailored solutions. The overarching objective remains to empower women and to enhance their access to indispensable resources, thereby cultivating inclusive societies conducive to overall prosperity.

Conclusion

In essence, Pakistan's multifaceted engagement in international organizations and its active involvement in UN missions, coupled with the notable contributions of its female peacekeepers, underscore the country's commitment to promoting global peace, diplomacy, and the principles of the UN. This comprehensive approach solidifies Pakistan's position as a critical international diplomacy player. It reinforces its role as a significant contributor to the collective efforts to maintain peace and stability worldwide.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

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The Transformative Role of Artificial Intelligence in Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping

NUST Journal of International Peace & Stability
2024, Vol. 7(1) Pages 104-109



njips.nust.edu.pk

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.37540/njips.v7i1.166>

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Introduction

The dynamic development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is profoundly impacting everyday lives, presenting a multitude of possibilities and challenges. In the scholarly landscape, Omar (2023) highlights the impact of AI on academics and practitioners as it introduces novel approaches in the field of research. His research explored AI's role in assessing human behavior, recording and storing human intelligence in information technology systems, and subsequently programming it to execute tasks traditionally performed by humans effectively. In the contemporary era, AI and autonomous systems are becoming an integral part of our lives, and the prospect of an AI-assisted society is imminent. To harness the potential of AI, it is thus imperative to adopt a proactive strategy involving the implementation of policy frameworks, structural measures, and monitoring systems, leading to a positive synergy between AI and human intelligence.

Considering the wide range of AI, it has transformed various spheres, from robotics to autonomous vehicles and advanced language models. Its rapid development is comparable to milestones like the invention of the wheel or the discovery of electricity. However, the discourse on AI is predominantly driven by engineers and tech firms, lacking comprehensive input from the social sciences. In the race for AI advancement, the creators of AI applications are more focused on building tech, often overlooking the implications and consequences of their experiments. Their primary interest lies in technical development, sometimes neglecting thoughtful consideration of innovations' potential impacts and ethical considerations. This knowledge gap underscores the need for a more balanced and inclusive approach to navigating the evolving landscape of AI.

AI's Evolution in Defense: From Data-Driven Learning to Deep Learning

While AI has the distinctive potential to revolutionize military strategies, ammunition systems, and operations, it simultaneously plays a pivotal role in enhancing international and domestic peace processes. As Yamakawa (2019) noted in his study, he explored the possibilities of using AI to achieve peacekeeping among human

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Received 10 October 2023; Revised 15 November 2023; Accepted 15 December 2023; Published online 31 January 2024

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societies, which can be pivotal in maintaining peace. He proposed a universal AI-based system that can arbitrate conflicts in human societies by focusing on shared goals and common values.

It is also observed that over the years, countries allocated significant funds mainly for research, focused on integrating AI and cyber technologies to enhance their defense capabilities. From Cracking Germany's Enigma machine in the 1940s to spotting 6,000 new craters on the surface of the moon, AI has shifted to a data-driven approach, where computers are fed with large amounts of data and are programmed to learn and draw conclusions from them (*Artificial Intelligence Timeline*, 2019). In technological evolution, the Dynamic Analysis and Replanning Tool (DART), an AI program used by the US military, was the first of its kind intended to deal with logistics issues (Goswami, 2021).

The next leap after data-driven machine learning is 'deep learning' pioneered by Geoffrey Hinton, also known as the 'godfather of AI.' In the domain of deep learning, the simplification of data pre-processing sets it apart from traditional machine learning. These algorithms efficiently handle unstructured data, like text and images, automating feature extraction and diminishing the need for human experts (*What Is Deep Learning?* n.d.). It enables computers to mimic human thoughts, emotions, responses, and experiences using real-time sensory data from cameras, sensors, and microphones to interpret, process, and execute autonomously. This technology has the potential to be misused for intentional and unintentional violence. They do not follow traditional security paradigms of deterrence and mutually assured destruction but rather encourage pre-emptive offense. Therefore, the potential for AI-assisted and powered warfare underscores the need for strategies to counter, manage, and contain full-scale global, interstate, or domestic conflicts.

The Impact of AI on Conflict Transformation and Peace Efforts

The increasing prevalence of AI technology on the battlefield requires urgent legislative measures and regulatory frameworks to address and manage its implications adeptly. AI holds significant potential in shaping the future of peace processes, encompassing conflict prevention, peacekeeping missions, and peacebuilding efforts.

The research conducted by Schreiner (2023) highlights the significant applications of AI in the battlefield, with four primary areas of focus: logistics, reconnaissance, cyberspace, and warfare. As of the research, AI applications in the first three scenarios are already in advanced stages, either in use or undergoing testing. Using AI in military operations offers several benefits, potentially limiting human costs, increasing precision, enabling remote or autonomous operations, and enhancing overall efficiency. The applications of AI in the military span a wide range of functions, including strategic decision-making, data processing and research, combat simulation, target recognition, threat monitoring, drone swarms, cybersecurity, transportation, casualty care, and evacuation (*Military Applications of AI*, 2023). Fully autonomous kamikaze drones, referred to as Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS), are already being used on a small scale. These autonomous weapons represent the next revolution in warfare.

The complexity and ease of constructing and activating AI applications in cyber warfare are highly notable. As emphasized by Johnson and Krabill (2020), integrating AI systems with existing cyber offense tools can act as potent force multipliers.

Moreover, distinguishing truth becomes increasingly challenging as deep fakes and generative AI gain prominence. The manipulation of images, videos, and audio opens the door for easier dissemination of misinformation and disinformation. This introduces an additional layer of unpredictability and complexity, hinting at a scenario where guaranteed destruction may replace the concept of mutually assured destruction. In November 2021, UNESCO took a ground-breaking step by issuing the inaugural 'Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence.' This document, acknowledged by all 193 UN member states, delves into crucial aspects of human rights (*Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*, 2023).

The document on ethics is a ground-breaking success, as it was observed that when data given to AI systems is marked by a substantial degree of recklessness, it leads to widespread consequences. One of the critical concerns that has emerged is the presence of racial and gender biases in specific AI applications, primarily stemming from misrepresentative and discriminatory data. The acknowledgment of human biases in gender and race present in global data and media production challenges the perception of AI as a neutral and unbiased third party.

Research like that conducted by Buolamwini (2019) has highlighted significant biases in AI systems, particularly in facial recognition applications. Notably, AI systems perform better on male faces than female faces, and error rates are exceptionally high for darker-skinned women. This underscores the importance of addressing biases at various levels, including the data used to train AI systems, to ensure fair and equitable outcomes.

The document on ethics reflects a growing awareness within the AI community about the potential societal impact of AI technologies and the need for responsible development and deployment. Addressing biases and promoting fairness in AI applications is essential for fostering trust in these technologies and ensuring their benefits are accessible and equitable for diverse user groups. Ongoing research, policy, and industry standards efforts aim to mitigate biases and promote ethical considerations in AI development and deployment.

Addressing the mentioned challenges and limitations confronting AI systems, such as explainability, responsibility, fairness, and misuse, requires a proactive approach. As discussed by Lawton and Wigmore (n.d.), a comprehensive solution involves implementing a robust policy framework, proactive ethical education, and efficient monitoring systems is required. Also, as mentioned earlier, the role of the United Nations can be significant in establishing the foundations to confront AI challenges and facilitate a seamless transition to a globally assisted AI system, given the technology's boundless potential for sustainable development.

Many countries lag in the development and adoption of AI, and a handful of states dominate the AI race, with private sectors significantly influencing development. Governments within these states often lack adequate guidance when dealing with AI issues. In it, the UN's intervention is crucial to formulating an international AI governance framework that transcends borders and jurisdictions. A key focus should be on halting or restricting the development of lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS) and AI-powered cyber tools, treating them akin to weapons of mass destruction. To mitigate potential harm and mishaps, the UN should foster principles of transparency and dialogue among all states under its leadership.

In the words of UN General Secretary Antonio Guterres, "AI is being put to work in connection with peace and security, including by the United Nations. It is increasingly being used to identify patterns of violence, monitor ceasefires and more,

helping to strengthen our peacekeeping, mediation and humanitarian efforts” (*Secretary-General’s Remarks to the Security Council on Artificial Intelligence*, 2023).

AI in Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution: Enhancing Security and Tactical Capabilities

The potential impact of AI in conflict prevention is vast. Intelligent surveillance systems can play a pivotal role in identifying instances of escalating hate speech or the presence of violent language. Over time, the patterns of violence and hate will be identified with better accuracy, creating a universal monitoring system that can score and evaluate potential conflict zones with increasing efficiency and precision. Findings and learnings from one part of the world can be used in another continent without much capital or intensive training. A uniform international monitoring system would make governments more aware of the situation within and outside their borders, resulting in timely intervention. Furthermore, translation and contextualization of information can be done instantaneously, curbing the language barrier. This real-time information processing improves forecast systems that allow for identifying conflict patterns.

Furthermore, AI can transform conflict resolution, presenting a unique blend of consistency and impartiality. By Processing data in binary terms, AI systems serve as invaluable tools for mediators, providing real-time, context-rich information during negotiations. This wealth of data will enhance transparency, trust, and cooperation between conflicting parties, enriching the resolution process. Additionally, leveraging AI as a supportive tool will enhance the effectiveness of human mediators, ensuring that the conclusions drawn are aligned with ethical considerations and contribute to a more informed and equitable resolution of conflicts.

Similarly, in the dynamic landscape of AI and conflict resolution, the emergence of CogSolv technology is highly significant. CogSolv can model how different parties might react in specific scenarios, enabling it to simulate and understand potential responses from opposing groups. This capacity facilitates persuasion and dialogue in conflict situations, with CogSolv working to generate win-win scenarios and enhance the overall outcomes of conflict resolution efforts. By delving into the intricacies of human interaction and emotion and getting deep into how humans interact and feel, CogSolv is shaping to be a real game-changer in bringing understanding and cooperation to conflict resolutions (Olsher, 2015).

While in peacekeeping activities, AI is very significant in making human lives more secure. For instance, in Peacekeeping missions, autonomous drones can secure areas, provide real-time data, and mitigate troops’ casualties. The role of peacekeepers in patrolling exposes them to potential terrorist attacks, making them vulnerable. The integration of AI would serve as a protective measure, reducing the risk to human capital and enhancing overall safety in such operations.

By leveraging advanced technologies, AI can augment surveillance and threat detection capabilities, enabling peacekeepers to navigate challenging environments with heightened awareness. The deployment of autonomous systems and intelligent algorithms can assist in identifying potential threats; the AI-generated scenario-based exercises are one practical example that enhances soldiers’ tactical abilities. Likewise, machine learning analysis can provide actionable and tactical suggestions on a much more grass-roots level than ever (Pasligh, 2019).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the advent of an AI-assisted or fully autonomous future appears inevitable. As we stand at this technological crossroad, it becomes a duty and responsibility of the international community to comprehend the trajectory of AI's role in conflict resolution and peacekeeping. Acknowledging the transformative potential of AI, it is imperative to deploy proactive countermeasures and establish robust policy frameworks. This strategic approach aims to mitigate the potential harms and violence associated with AI and machine learning, promoting a harmonious coexistence between technology and the pursuit of global peace and stability.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

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War and Peacekeeping: Personal Reflections on Conflict and Lasting Peace

by *Martin Bell*

NUST Journal of International Peace & Stability
2024, Vol. 7(1) Pages 110-112



njips.nust.edu.pk

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.37540/njips.v7i1.168>

*Memoona Nasir¹

Martin Bell's book is a notable addition to the literature on conflict journalism and international peacekeeping efforts. In "War and Peacekeeping: Personal Reflections on Conflict and Lasting Peace," Bell provides a compelling and insightful perspective on the complexities of war zones, the role of peacekeepers, the cost of human life, and the ethical dilemmas faced by those involved in the war. Bell's book is a captivating journey through his life, transitioning from a soldier to a war journalist and becoming a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador. With insightful lessons from varied experiences, the book focuses on the realities of conflict zones, with particular attention to UN peacekeepers.

The book is divided into nineteen chapters, each covering a different aspect of war and peacekeeping. Bell, who has worked in more than 120 countries, "In a life of accidental episodes," he writes, "I have been a soldier, a war reporter, a Member of Parliament, a UNICEF ambassador, a battlefield target, a war crimes witness, a writer, a poet, an ethics adviser, a lecturer, and an incorrigible wanderer." Through his stories and personal experiences, the author covers various topics related to soldiering, war reporting, and ethical dilemmas. In the opening chapters of the book, he shares his experiences of being a soldier on the ground and later as a war reporter, dealing with the complexities involved in covering war-torn regions. Drawing from personal experiences, he perfectly mentioned the devastating human cost of the war and the futility of armed conflict in the following words: "We have lived through the most miraculous times of more than seventy years of global peace: how long can we last before the Third World War? There are no winners in warfare but only losers."

The central theme of the book is the effect of war on both individuals and societies. Bell, as a war journalist, depicts his firsthand encounters of witnessing the Srebrenica massacre and the indiscriminate attacks in Yemen, which resulted in numerous human casualties. His account offers a distressing illustration of the profound human tragedy often resulting from armed conflicts. In his analysis, he argues that the psychological toll of war on individuals is unmeasurable, which makes it difficult to

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Received 19 January 2024; **Revised** 22 January 2024; **Accepted** 25 January 2024; **Published online** 31 January 2024

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readjust to civilian life. The author vividly depicts the horrors of war and highlights the international community's failure to prevent genocides and bloodshed. From Africa to the Middle East and Europe, the world bore witness to mass massacres that could have been averted. Within the pages of his book, the author documents numerous instances where the blue helmets, entrusted with the protection of civilians, faltered. Despite clear mandates, there were cases where UN peacekeepers failed to take timely and appropriate action. One such instance occurred in South Sudan, where aid workers were killed near a UN troops camp. Subsequent investigation reports acknowledged shortcomings such as lack of preparedness, ineffective command and control, and an inward-looking attitude among the peacekeepers.

He further draws upon his experiences as a war correspondent in conflict-ridden regions like Bosnia and Rwanda. In these instances, peacekeeping initiatives proved ineffective in preventing acts of genocide and ethnic cleansing. For Bell, the peacekeeping efforts should be tailored to suit the conflict zone's requirements, keeping their political, social, and cultural dynamics in mind. Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who also served as head of the UN Peacekeeping Department, candidly admitted that more could have been done to prevent the Rwandan Genocide. Reflecting on the Srebrenica events, he underscored the failure of the international community to take decisive action, leading to bloodshed during wartime. Annan acknowledged the existing loopholes in the UN Peacekeeping Department's powers to enforce peace effectively.

Moreover, he delves into the comprehensive analysis of the peacekeeping efforts and their challenges. In assessing the peacekeeping efforts, the author argues that political, logistic, and resource-related obstacles usually hinder these efforts. Through his reasoning, Bell pointed out several obstacles, such as a lack of well-defined objectives, insufficient resources, and the divergent interests of the parties involved in the peacekeeping efforts. While UN peacekeeping gradually evolved, it learned from challenges, drawbacks, and opportunities that arose over time. This learning process involved understanding what actions to take and what to avoid. The transformation of peacekeeping from an initiative into a practical approach took years and came at the cost of numerous civilian lives. It is essential to commend the commendable sacrifices made by the blue helmets to pursue peace.

He also illustrates the significant function of the media in influencing the public's understanding of peacekeeping endeavors and delves into the intricate connection between the military and the media. Drawing upon his encounters in Bosnia and Somalia, the author asserts that it is the ethical duty of journalists to communicate the actualities of conflict and peacekeeping efforts, all the while recognizing the difficulties of upholding objectivity and impartiality amid distressing occurrences.

In response, he also looks into the challenges journalists face during the missions, such as the risk of being targeted by the combatants and the difficulties of assessing accurate information and reporting on sensitive issues such as atrocities and human rights violations. Bell succinctly captures the challenges of war reporting in one line, 'War reporting, like UN Peacekeeping, comes at the price paid in blood.' Bell stresses the crucial role of journalists in bearing witness to the realities of war and giving evidence at war crime tribunals. However, he also calls attention to the fact that American soldiers do not typically participate in peacekeeping missions, and American journalists do not bear witness to conflict. This critique underscores the importance of international collaboration and accountability in peacekeeping efforts and war reporting.

The major strength of this book is the analysis of the human dimensions of the conflict and the peacekeeping efforts. Through his experience, he explores different kinds of cases where humans were affected by the horrors of the war, including the psychological impact of observing atrocities. This comprehensive analysis shows the book's commitment to raising awareness and promoting understanding of the human cost of war.

There is a notable limitation in the book as the perspectives of peacekeepers and UN officials on the events are limited, creating a gap for readers to grasp both sides of the story entirely. Regardless, the central message of 'War and Peacekeeping' is clear: to comprehend the intricacies of war and work towards lasting peace, it is imperative to acknowledge the human stories and suffering that often remain obscured amid geopolitical analyses and strategic considerations. Bell's book is essential to understanding the conflict zone's operational challenges and power dynamics.

Nevertheless, as the peacekeeping doctrine evolves, it becomes increasingly intricate. Peacekeeping missions worldwide confront a myriad of challenges, backlash, and hardships. Bell, through the pictorial content in his book and experiences as a war journalist, vividly illustrates and brings attention to these issues.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

When Peacekeeping Missions Collide

by *Paul Diehl, Daniel Druckman, and Grace B. Mueller*

NUST Journal of International Peace & Stability
2024, Vol. 7(1) Pages 113-115



njips.nust.edu.pk

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.37540/njips.v7i1.169>

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In the 21st century, the world grapples with persistent conflicts. UN peacekeeping missions have become vital for mitigating conflicts and promoting peace, with a notable shift from democracy promotion to including election supervision, leading to a 130% increase in mission numbers. 'When Peacekeeping Missions Collide' by Diehl, Druckman, and Mueller scrutinizes the intricate web of mandates, actors, and missions, arguing that the proliferation of missions often results in unintended negative consequences or 'collisions,' hindering progress. The authors, recognized experts in conflict resolution, emphasize the need for improved coordination among missions for cohesive efforts.

The book's central argument highlights the challenges posed by the proliferation of UN missions with overarching mandates in 21st century Peace Operations, leading to 'collisions' among missions that hinder the peace process. The authors recognize traditional peacekeeping roles centered on ceasefires. However, peacekeepers are tasked with broader responsibilities in the post-Cold War era, including rule of law, infrastructure development, and humanitarian assistance. They argue that multiple missions in the same conflict zones can have unintended repercussions for the peace operation.

The authors have introduced a comprehensive framework for assessing UN peace operations, emphasizing a holistic mission evaluation. The framework categorizes missions into domains such as Traditional Peacekeeping, Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR), Humanitarian Assistance, Election Supervision/Promotion of Democracy, Human Rights, Security Sector Reform (SSR), Rule of Law, Local Governance, and Reconciliation. Additionally, the framework covers peacebuilding missions like Reconciliation and Local Governance, providing confidence ratings for each mission category. Out of these eleven missions, traditional peacekeeping remains dominant in recent operations, constituting nearly 80% of missions, while Preventive Deployment and Pacification missions are rare.

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Received 19 January 2024; **Revised** 22 January 2024; **Accepted** 25 January 2024; **Published online** 31 January 2024

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The book extensively examines various cases, emphasizing the pivotal role of UN missions in diverse peace operations. Cases like ONUC in the Congo and the Security Sector Reform mission highlight mixed success, effectively restoring law and order but encountering challenges in disarmament. Conversely, UNPROFOR's mission in Bosnia faced ineffectiveness in traditional peacekeeping and DDR, revealing compatibility issues between missions, particularly in the complex conflict terrain. Additional case studies, such as UNTAET in East Timor, MONUC in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone, showcase the effectiveness of basic security tasks and shorter-term missions but reveal challenges in longer-term missions like SSR and reconciliation. This nuanced analysis underscores the intricate dynamics of post-conflict peace operations, supporting the authors' argument for meticulous mission sequencing to enhance overall effectiveness. The central argument is further supported by the strategic timing of the book as well as the eminent writers.

The subject book critically evaluates the UN peacekeeping approach, emphasizing the need for improved coordination among missions to ensure cohesive efforts rather than contradictory actions. The book is structured into three essential parts: an overview of modern peacekeeping, featuring the proliferation of missions and coordination challenges; in-depth case studies of Bosnia, Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, East Timor, and Sierra Leone, dissecting mission collisions; and a proposal for a conceptual framework emphasizing 'compatibility' in mission functioning.

The authors acknowledge the dearth of research in this realm and introduce a framework based on mission ordering and compatibility, advocating the 'Security First' proposition and asserting that success in essential security missions is fundamental for overall mission success. The book stands out for its meticulous research, distinguishing terms such as peace operations, missions, and mandates and constructing a persuasive narrative grounded in fieldwork, interviews, and archival data. The theoretical framework, informed by conflict resolution expertise, is supported by five diverse case studies, providing a comprehensive understanding of mission interactions. The authors contribute to scholarly discourse and offer practical recommendations for enhancing mission coordination, communication, and transparency.

However, there are certain limitations. While the case studies provide rich insights, the focus on five missions raises questions about the generalizability of the findings. The authors acknowledge these limitations and call for further research, but the scope of the book leaves some questions. Secondly, the book effectively highlights the potential pitfalls of mission collisions; it could benefit from a more nuanced dialogue on the synergies between missions. Lastly, the proposed policy recommendations are well-intentioned, but the book could investigate the implementation challenges more deeply. For instance, navigating the complex political landscapes within the UN and member states can be a significant obstacle in achieving greater mission coordination.

The authors, long aware of the limitations of traditional peacekeeping, probe into the increasingly elaborate world of today's operations. The book covers various aspects of peacekeeping operations, including preparation, training, and challenges between mission types and the long-term impact of these operations. The discussion encompasses adaptation, contextual factors, and the dynamics of peacekeeping processes. Through five meticulously researched case studies—Bosnia, Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, East Timor, and Sierra Leone—the book dissects the

anatomy of the 'collisions'—unintended negative consequences arising from mission interactions.

The argument highlights the impact of competing mandates, resource constraints, and political agendas in undermining trust. These intertwined threads of scholarship and global conflict dynamics inform the contemporary urgency of "When Peacekeeping Missions Collide." However, the book is not simply a tale of the missteps in peacekeeping but rather an effort to craft a practical, theoretical framework for "compatibility" between missions. Based on wide-ranging concepts like mandate synergy and competition, this framework offers a valuable tool for foreseeing and alleviating negative interactions. This book emphasizes the need to move beyond simplistic binary narratives of success and failure in missions and engage with the complex on-ground realities. By acknowledging the potential pitfalls of collisions and actively seeking solutions, this book offers a future where peacekeeping operations can be more sustainable.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

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