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Aims and Scope

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

Aiming to provide research-based knowledge through scholarly papers written by national and international authors, NJIPS is committed to publishing original and timely research from around the world. It aims to provide a platform for academic discussion and debate over multifaceted issues and topics and encourages contributions from multi-disciplinary backgrounds. The journal is particularly committed to advancing scholarship oriented towards both scholarly and practitioner audiences to emerge with pragmatic perspectives and policy recommendations.

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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 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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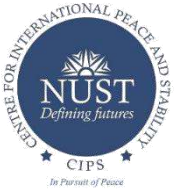
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Replicating Europe's Normative Power: Challenges and Pathways for South Asia's Regional Integration

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Abstract

European nations attained stability and integration by overcoming a turbulent history marked by deeply entrenched conflicts and the profound devastation of two world wars. Europe has evolved into a 'normative power' and the European Union into a 'community of practice' by overcoming statism and establishing responsive institutions and systems of accountability. Europe's transformation reflects the practical application of normative principles. In contrast, South Asia grapples with political instability and geo-strategic challenges that impede regional integration. This paper identifies the key obstacles to political connectivity and adopting normative practices in South Asia. It further explores potential pathways, enabling the region to draw lessons from Europe's experience and develop into a community of practice and a normative power.

Introduction

The past three decades have witnessed profound transformations across the political, economic, and environmental landscape, shaped by several pivotal events. These include the collapse of the Soviet Union and the decline of communism in 1989, the reunification of Germany in 1990, the 9/11 attacks in 2001, the global financial crisis of 2008, the USA's abrupt withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021, the Russo-Ukraine war and strategic crisis in the Middle East. These historical and contemporary events have fundamentally reshaped the dynamics of global politics (Sarotte, 2015). The influence of identity politics has gradually waxed with corresponding ideational gambits emerging as the main avenues of inquiry in systemic political configuration.

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The linkage between identity politics and ideational gambits in international relations (IR) lies in how identity-based frameworks shape states' behaviors, perceptions, and strategic interactions on the global stage. Ideational gambits, which involve using ideas, norms, and values to influence or manipulate international outcomes, often draw upon the principles and dynamics of identity politics.

The emergence of integrated Europe as a 'normative power' and the European Union (EU) as a 'community of practice' are fundamentally successful civilizational overtures claimed as ideational supremacy over material power (Diez & Pace, 2011). In this backdrop, Whitman (2011) noted that the EU emerged as a *sui generis* agent of regional and global politics on a solid foundation, and Manners (2002, p. 252) mentioned that today, the most important factor shaping the international role of the EU is not what it does or what it says, but what it is. These geopolitical developments have led the scholars of IR to draw a corollary of the successful European experiment in other contiguous regions of the world.

Meanwhile, the South Asian regional states exhibit diverse economic structures and varying levels of development (Sehgal et al., 2020). Nonetheless, these states have an inherent homogeneity in social and cultural domains and share a common historical legacy. Enduring conflicts and strategic mistrust have been deeply entrenched among South Asian states. A prime example is the enduring rivalry between India and Pakistan, rooted in a fractious history, a legacy of mistrust, unresolved territorial disputes, and the negative repercussions of colonial policies (Pant & Shah, 2019). Religious and ethnic divisions further exacerbate this animosity.

Despite these challenges, a collective aspiration exists among the moderate political elites and various segments of the general populace for a stable and peaceful region grounded in a communitarian ethos. This aspiration is reflected in the establishment of regional organizations such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA), and South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA), advocate for integration across political, social, and economic dimensions (Chakma, 2018).

Additionally, crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and South Asia's persistent smog and recurring natural disasters, underscore the urgent need for collaborative regional solutions to address transnational challenges. During the pandemic, countries initially shuttered borders and restricted cross-border movement, but it soon became evident that joint efforts were essential to combat the virus effectively (Kokudo & Sugiyama, 2020). Similarly, the smog crisis, exacerbated by practices like stubble burning and inadequate emissions controls, continues to wreak havoc on public health and economies in the region, with air pollution causing nearly 2 million premature deaths annually and costing South Asia approximately 7.4% of its GDP (World bank, 2023). Cities like Lahore and New Delhi, frequently topping global pollution rankings, illustrate how this crisis transcends borders, requiring coordinated action between nations. Proposals such as 'smog diplomacy' and regional frameworks for sustainable practices and clean energy adoption highlight the potential of regionalism to address these pressing issues. By integrating efforts to combat pandemics and environmental crises, South Asia can foster a culture of cooperation, paving the way for broader integration and resilience against shared challenges (Benoît & Hay, 2022).

Research Framework

This study is driven by the central research question: Can South Asia emulate the EU's model of normative power to overcome political and economic barriers, and what specific mechanisms and practices could facilitate regional integration in the context of enduring rivalries? In addressing this question, the study explores the salient features of Normative Power Europe (NPE) as a 'community of practice,' tracing its cultural and normative evolution since the 1940s and its transformative impact on modern Europe and its neighborhood. Drawing lessons from the EU's practices, the study examines potential pathways for overcoming the persistent challenges to regional integration in South Asia.

The study adopts a qualitative research approach, relying primarily on secondary data sources to evaluate the applicability of the EU's normative power model to South Asia. Key references include official documents such as SAARC and SAFTA agreements, international organizations like the World Bank and WTO policy reports, and scholarly literature on regional integration and normative power practices. To provide further depth, media reports are analyzed to capture public discourse and societal perceptions surrounding Indo-Pak trade and broader regional dynamics. Thematic analysis is employed to identify recurring patterns related to political barriers, economic interdependence, and institutional inefficiencies in South Asia. Additionally, comparative analysis draws parallels between the EU's normative practices and South Asia's unique challenges. These approaches provide nuanced insights into potential mechanisms and strategies for fostering regional integration in South Asia, inspired by the EU's model.

As part of the research framework, the NPE concept provides a foundational lens to understand how the EU shaped global norms through ideational and non-coercive practices rather than traditional military power. By promoting principles such as societal peace, civic liberty, participatory democracy, the rule of law, and human rights, the EU purports itself as a normative actor in international relations. Additional values like equality, sustainable development, and good governance reinforce its framework. Foundational studies, including Adler and Barnett's (1998) work on *Security Communities* and Bellamy's (2004) insights into institutional cooperation, highlight the transformative role of shared norms and trust in promoting integration. Manners' (2013) seminal exploration of NPE further underscores the EU's ability to influence through soft power mechanisms, exemplified by initiatives such as the Schengen Agreement and the European Neighborhood Policy. Complementary works by Cameron (2004) emphasize how the EU's institutional frameworks transcend power politics, offering valuable lessons for fragmented regions like South Asia. These studies collectively establish a robust theoretical grounding for analyzing how the EU's practices can inform strategies for regional integration in other contexts.

To contextualize the theoretical discussion of normative power within the South Asian milieu, region-specific studies provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities for integration. Persistent barriers to Indo-Pak trade, including high tariffs, non-tariff barriers, and the prevalence of informal trade routes, are highlighted in recent scholarships (Hussain, 2011; Chaturvedi et al., 2015). The World Bank South Asia Report (2018) underscores the region's untapped trade potential, estimating that bilateral trade between India and Pakistan could reach $37 billion annually, compared to the current $2.3 billion (Kathuria, 2018). Institutional inefficiencies within SAARC and SAFTA have also been explored, revealing their limited success in fostering integration due to political and operational constraints.

Contemporary developments, such as the Pulwama attack and India's subsequent revocation of Pakistan's Most Favored Nation (MFN) status, underscore the fragile nature of regional relations (Suneja, 2019). Comparative examples, such as the stabilizing effects of economic interdependence between China and the USA or China and Taiwan, further illustrate the transformative potential of trade in mitigating political conflicts (Cameron, 2004). These studies collectively establish a robust foundation for examining how the EU's normative model can be adapted to address South Asia's unique challenges, bridging theoretical insights with practical realities

Theoretics of Normative Power Europe

As elaborated earlier, the core of this study is the concept of NPE, which emphasizes the EU's ability to shape global norms through ideational and normative practices rather than military might or coercive strategies. Analysts argue that NPE promotes civilian soft power and restrained military power, enabling the EU to shape the conceptions of normal in international relations. This transformative approach is grounded in multifarious norms, including societal peace, civic liberty, participatory democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. Additional principles, such as social harmony, equality, sustainable development, and decent governance, are also integral to the EU's normative framework. It promotes the EU's capacity to shape the conceptions of normal in international relations with far greater focus (Janusch, 2016). An incisive insight reveals that the foundation of the normative power of Europe is laid on multifarious norms like societal peace, civic liberty, participatory democracy, the rule of law, and the value of human rights. Besides these, generic norms like social harmony, equality, sustainable development, and decent governance are also important components of European normative power (James, 2016).

While functioning in an ideational-non-material domain, legitimacy is the prime factor that inspires other actors to follow suit. This legitimacy in NPE is derived from established treaties chartered along the lines of UN Covenants embedded in the aforementioned norms (Butler, 2007). The challenges of spreading these norms in the neighborhood and across the globe are confronted by setting personal examples, establishing strategic communications, institutionalizing interactions within states and organizations, economic exchanges and assistance packages, presence of EU special representatives, and reifying the social and political identity.

Europe's normative power policy processes entail frequent interaction amongst an assemblage of key private and public stakeholders present at supra-state, state, and sub-state tiers in a linear cum non-hierarchical setting absent any of the core and predominant authority. In the given solid framework, the EU's institution comes into play to shape the normative interactions. The persistence of rules, norms, and standard operating procedures affects the decision loop in the EU. It wields influence by incentivizing EU accessions, and the spread of civilizational practices depends on accepting standard norms, practices, and institutions (Roos & Westerveen, 2020).

The novelty is in the internal system of governance that the EU has devised and spread of its security community of practice to others. It differentiates between 'governments' as a skewed concept and 'governance,' which dwells on a broader understanding of politics and collectivity for good at all tiers. The EU practices convey that building a security community of practice, currently prominent in Europe, relies fundamentally on the abandonment of power politics. This approach is suggested as a model that could be replicated in other regions (Bicchi, 2022). Hence, normative power practices are diverse and inclusive, transcending traditional power politics.

The softening of borders 'Schengen area,' a trans-state zone cooperation amongst civilizations, is an order of the day vis-à-vis clashes as a default setting. The inherent flexibility of the EU allows for the integration of Eurasia and Caucasus. Developing a sagacity of togetherness and regional 'we feeling' and 'we doing' concepts without formal EU membership through the participatory forums like the Conference on Security Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), Barcelona Process, a 'European Neighborhood Policy' (ENP), a 'Mediterranean Union' (Adler, 2009). Such initiatives helped the EU to translate normative power into real material influence with accompanying political control. Beyond binding treaties, the EU also adopted 'soft' law practices under the rubric of the Open Method of Coordination in the shape of non-binding and non-enforceable voluntary obligations. A relevant case is the EU's support for the global abolition of the death penalty despite risking economic ties and facing opposition from the USA, China, Saudi Arabia, and the European Council (EEAS, 2022).

Evolution of Normative Power Europe

The concept of NPE has historic roots as a community of practice. The way Europe has transformed culturally since the 1940s and moved away from Westphalian statism is considered a significant shift (Manners, 2009). European integration experiment was initially driven by functionalist cooperation, exemplified by pooling coal and steel industries of former rivals France and Germany to prevent future wars and counter communist threats. This approach inspired various cooperative structures worldwide, including leagues, unions, and pacts, addressing post-World War II devastation, decolonization, and economic reconstruction, offering an alternative to traditional realist alliances (Segers, 2023). The transition towards normative practices comprised a set of processes that resulted in the transformation of Europe, leading it towards enhanced integration, complemented by diversity as its strength.

However, the contemporaneous form of NPE is attributable to the EU's cultural, political, and economic initiatives entrenched not only in the core of Europe but also transgressing to the neighbourhood in the northeast and southeastwards. It acquired the ability to shape the idea of 'normal' in international politics, which had purely material underpinnings, and thus dismantled the parochial schisms of centuries between the regional states. Self-restraint and transmitting the positive influence of replication on other actors was one of the major attributes of normative power in Europe (Manners, 2009). The demise of the Cold War also reflected the growing influence of ideational or normative power, which duly manifested in the further cementing of the European Community. With a much stronger ideational base, the reconfigured EU now espouses normative power conveniently exercised while dealing with the outside world with the expanding scope of its internal policies in trade and sustainable development goals (Adler, 2009).

The EU has long been regarded as a proponent of 'normative power,' emphasizing the promotion of universal values such as human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in its external relations. However, the EU's response to the recent conflict in Gaza has raised questions about the consistency of its actions with these ideational principles. In the wake of escalating violence between Israel and Hamas, the EU's stance has appeared conflicted. While the EU condemned Hamas's attacks and affirmed Israel's right to self-defense, it also called for adherence to international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians. Despite these statements, the EU refrained from suspending political dialogue with Israel, even amid concerns over

potential human rights violations in Gaza. This decision suggests a reluctance to leverage its normative influence fully, potentially due to geopolitical considerations and internal divisions among member states.

The issuance of arrest warrants by the International Criminal Court (ICC) against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and others for alleged war crimes further complicated the EU's position (van den Berg & Al-Mughrabi, 2024). While EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell emphasized the binding nature of ICC warrants, the EU collectively did not take a definitive stance, reflecting a cautious approach that some critics view as inconsistent with its normative commitments (Autin, 2024). This ambivalence has led to perceptions of double standards, particularly when contrasted with the EU's decisive actions in other conflicts, such as imposing sanctions in response to Russia's actions in Ukraine. The EU's hesitancy to apply similar measures in the context of the Gaza conflict has been interpreted as a deviation from its normative power aspirations, suggesting that material and strategic interests may sometimes overshadow its commitment to normative principles (Skordas, 2018).

Can Conflictive South Asia Replicate Normative Power European Model?

The ensuing cooperation and interdependence among European states prevented major conflicts and correspondingly ensured that future relations remained linear and co-efficiently cooperative. The South Asian march towards integration underpinned by normative community practices can materialize if power politics are confronted decisively, as Europe did in post-World War II. An inclusive regional security architecture could promote stability and confidence among regional communities. Without this, the prospect of economic regionalism, particularly in South Asia, remains an elusive goal (Dent, 2016).

European nations demonstrated successful experience of regional integration with strong regional institutional structures. South Asia is a case of 'late regional integration' and can learn lessons from European experiences for regional integration (Sirinavasan, 2011). Active regional institutional mechanisms covering a wide area of regional economic, political, and social aspects, like the EU, can benefit the economic and political interests of South Asian nations. Increased interdependence will pressure regional states to resolve all outstanding conflicts and disputes peacefully, undermining power politics and ensuing conflicts (Cameron, 2010). Management of inter-state or intra-state conflicts is the primary condition to begin with the regional integration process in South Asia, especially the inter-state conflicts that have made South Asia a nuclear flashpoint. The South Asian states must realize that their interests are interlinked, and no regional state alone can achieve the desired economic and political goals.

South Asia faces significant challenges in achieving effective regional integration due to a complex mix of historical, political, and structural factors. The prospects for regional integration and the emergence of normative power in South Asia are undermined by persistent challenges rooted in unresolved disputes, conflicting strategic aspirations, and aggressive policies. The enduring Kashmir issue, exacerbated by India's August 2019 revocation of its unique status, continues to fuel mistrust and acrimony among regional states, obstructing dialogue and collaborative efforts ("India revokes occupied Kashmir," 2019). India's ambitions for regional dominance contrasted with Pakistan's pursuit of sovereign equality, create a fundamental disconnect, hindering efforts to foster mutual cooperation. The competitive arms

buildup, including advancements, reflects a security-driven approach that detracts from a focus on regional integration.

Additionally, embracing hybrid warfare strategies leveraging disinformation campaigns and proxy forces exacerbates mistrust and undermines the environment necessary for regional collaboration (Mirza & Babar, 2020). Technological advancements, including artificial intelligence and hypersonic weapons, further amplify security concerns, creating an atmosphere of uncertainty and suspicion. The absence of effective crisis communication mechanisms and over-reliance on external mediators also prevent the development of a self-sustained regional framework for conflict resolution. The 2019 Pulwama incident and subsequent tensions underscore the fragility of peace in the region, further highlighting the necessity for sustained dialogue. These entrenched challenges highlight the structural and ideological barriers to South Asia's emergence as a cohesive regional entity and embracing normative power practices.

Without addressing these foundational issues, the region's potential for economic, political, and social integration remains unrealized, and the pathway to fostering a shared regional identity grounded in common norms and values remains obstructed. Overcoming these hurdles requires shifting from security-driven agendas to collaborative and inclusive frameworks prioritizing shared interests and collective progress. Meanwhile, India's dominant size and influence present both opportunities and concerns, as smaller neighbors fear potential hegemony, complicating regional collaboration.

Economic and security cooperation remains limited despite initiatives like SAFTA and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). Intra-regional trade has not surpassed 5% due to tariff and non-tariff barriers, weak infrastructure, and non-binding agreements. Security challenges are further exacerbated by the absence of common defense mechanisms within regional organizations like SAARC, leaving cross-border terrorism and maritime threats unaddressed. Although newer frameworks such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) offer platforms for engagement, underlying animosities and power imbalances limit their effectiveness. The proliferation of fragmented initiatives like the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal Initiative (BBIN) has diluted focus and resources while pressing issues such as poverty, corruption, and terrorism undermining the region's ability to foster peace and stability (Mirza & Babar, 2020). For South Asia to realize its potential, more substantial commitments to economic regionalism, soft power diplomacy, and addressing governance gaps are crucial steps forward.

The current trajectory of geo-political and geo-economics relations in South Asia reflects curvilinear trends. The legacy of mistrust and lack of socialization has been among the chief constraining factors towards meaningful integration initiatives and the introduction of normative practices. The regional institutions that have the potential to reify normative power practices have not performed optimally to build the desired framework for cooperation and connectivity. Few states of the region have even shown an inclination towards globalization over regionalization. India, the biggest and the most influential South Asian state, is the forerunner of this trend. It has become a vital component of BRICS, a forum and independent international organization promoting commercial, political, and cultural cooperation among five key emerging economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (Garcia-Herrero, 2012). Concurrently, India has fostered a successful strategic partnership by joining the

Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) between Australia, India, Japan, and the USA. ("Quad Summit 2021," 2021). This Indian inclination to prefer extra-regional linkages with more considerable powers can be attributed to the more significant strategic and economic dividends vis-à-vis meek regional order and concomitant rewards (Hilali, 2001). Jyoti Malhotra (2021, para 9) reflected on this dismal performance and summed it up as follows:

> A Brookings study found that India's total trade with SAARC today hovers between 1.7 percent and 3.8 percent, according to 2017 figures. The study cited protectionist policies, the high cost of logistics, lack of political will, and a broader trust deficit as reasons. For any South Asian reading this, all of this sounds all too familiar.

The lack of belief by the largest state in the region disincentives other states to progressively think of regional integration. The chief restraining factor in the region for any meaningful normative practices and integration is thus an enduring rivalry and non-resolution of chronic disputes between two leading protagonists, India and Pakistan. Unfortunately, the two states failed to achieve any headway on any major disputes. These lurking disputes have generated an environment of mistrust between the two countries (Gul, 2004). No meaningful dialogue toward crisis management and eventual crisis resolution can occur unless the aggrieved parties shape the required environment for the talks. The bedrock of this acrimony is the unresolved issue of Kashmir for almost seven decades. The post-August 5, 2019, steps by India have made the issue further intractable by quashing the special status of Indian-Occupied Kashmir. Such unthoughtful ventures and the consistent intransigent approach taken by India on the other issues have relegated the chances of finding some reasonable solution to all bilateral issues acceptable to all stakeholders.

Adapting Normative Power Practices in South Asia

As a normative power, South Asia must prioritize human security by developing and institutionalizing comprehensive norms. This entails reconfiguring its security architecture and reinforcing its role as a political community. Policies anchored in normative and ideational principles precede securitized national interests, facilitating regional integration. The most significant point in this discourse is the ability of a community of practice to shape behaviors that are termed normal in the international arena (Manners, 2002).

Unfortunately, the leading states of South Asia fall deficient in a "culture of bargaining," and hence, the processes of formulating shared understandings and expectations remain a non-starter (Mehta, 2009, p. 228). The South Asian normative power practices must build on a new knowledge base, eventually preparing a shared community of practitioners with novel cultural understandings divorced from the region's conflictive legacy. The concept of *Normative Power South Asia* (NPSA), if adapted from the principles of NPE, could manifest through a range of practices designed to promote regional integration, stability, and development. These practices might pave the way for a desired end state vis-à-vis the prominence of normative power practices through the shared community of practices stipulated in the following discourse.

Promoting Shared Norms and Values

Promoting shared norms and values is foundational to establishing *Normative Power in South Asia* and fostering a cohesive regional identity. By championing collective efforts to address human rights issues, South Asian nations can tackle challenges such as gender inequality, child labour, and the marginalization of minorities. These efforts improve social equity and enhance mutual trust, creating a more stable regional environment. Therefore, establishing regional frameworks for the rule of law enhances stability by promoting transparent governance and facilitating mechanisms for legal cooperation. Furthermore, cross-border dispute resolution platforms, such as a proposed South Asian Court of Justice, could address long-standing issues like trade disagreements and water-sharing conflicts, offering neutral and fair solutions (Dhital, 2021).

Moreover, cultural harmony can also be a significant cornerstone for regional unity. South Asia's rich tapestry of shared languages, traditions, and historical narratives provides an untapped resource for fostering mutual respect and understanding. Cross-border cultural festivals, heritage preservation initiatives, and literary exchanges could celebrate these commonalities while countering divisive narratives. The prioritization of human rights, the rule of law, and cultural harmony would signal a commitment to shared principles, positioning South Asia as a normative power capable of shaping a stable, inclusive, cooperative regional order.

Softening of Border Disputes

Systemically, exponential growth has been witnessed in the movement of people across state boundaries. The leading factors that force or incentivize mass movements are multifarious. Conflicts over the non-natural borders are a bitter reminiscence of colonialism, which displaced hundreds of millions of people. The standoff between India and Pakistan over Kashmir and the dispute between Bangladesh and India are the reflections of unsettled borders that perpetuate to split people and endure conflict in South Asia. Seventy-five years on, these states have now stood at the cusp of heightened conflicts and need to transition beyond organizational statism and concede to modern-day realities. India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and other nations of South Asia need to realize that not-withstanding unambiguous border demarcations and militarization, masses will continue challenging the border management systems impinged upon them by a question of kinship, daily sustenance, and operational wants for daily life (Jones & Ferdoush, 2018). With this in view, intricate processes can be inclusively developed to soften the existing borders, which facilitate people-to-people contact that is free of political expediencies and not constrained by the geo-strategic environment of the region (Fazal-ur-Rahman, 2012).

Enabling SAARC's and SAFTA's Multilateral Potential

Ironically, SAARC's and SAFTA's true potential as a multilateral forum has been marred by regional power, political domain, and conflictive geo-strategic environments. Despite challenges, there have been notable periods when multilateralism in South Asia gained traction, particularly with Afghanistan's inclusion as a full member of SAARC and the granting of Observer status to major international actors such as China, Japan, South Korea, the USA, and the EU. Similarly, SAFTA came into force in 2006 to revitalize regional trade among SAARC states. Expectations were high that the SAFTA mechanism would become a harbinger of greater regional market access and trade. Nonetheless, trade facilitation indicators in South Asia

remained substantially dismal vis-à-vis other regions and were just ahead of Sub-Saharan Africa. (Raihan, 2012). To outweigh the influence of state power politics, it seems imperative to put prominence on normative practices with human rights as the center of the agenda, integrating communities and initiating civil society-based action plans. Such initiatives warrant the communities to be direct stakeholders in regional cooperation and integration. The potential of SAARC in fostering regionalism in South Asia is immense, as well as socio-economic cooperation and identifying areas like health, education, and digital technology as avenues for reinvigoration amidst political challenges.

Empowered citizenship paradigm and multilateral communitarian practices

Multiple contemporary citizenship practices fall under this rubric. Empowered citizenship entails practices at the state level that have greater legitimacy for the social rights of the working class, equality for all genders and mutually agreed rights, and a peaceful paradigm for dealing with cultural diversities (Kochenov, 2013). Introducing this model of citizenship in South Asia enhances the legitimacy behind its normative power projection within regional and international contexts. This model will ease the strain between nationalistic biases and shared norms in multilateral institutional settings. The contentious interstate issues must be tackled and dealt with bilaterally while promoting multilateral communitarianism.

The parliamentarians, journalists, academicians, entertainers, and masses cutting across the strata of society can gel to generate new norms by creating shared awareness. Institutional mechanisms and processes can further strengthen these new norms. The reinvigorated connections across the region will shape novel South Asian communities for social and cultural exchanges. The cultural co-occurrences and initiatives may fortify the efforts for enduring and mutually inclusive democracies embedded in intolerant and pluralistic societies within the region (Dash, 2008).

Leveraging Global Engagement

South Asia has immense potential to amplify its voice on the global stage through collaborative representation in international forums. The region can exert greater influence by presenting unified positions on pressing global issues such as climate change, trade, and public health. For instance, coordinated efforts to demand equitable climate financing or fair-trade practices could yield better outcomes for all member states. Such collaboration would require regional consensus mechanisms to align interests and formulate common policy stances (Colombo, 2023).

A unified South Asian bloc could emulate the EU's approach in global negotiations, where collective positions on issues like carbon emissions and trade disputes have enabled the EU to wield disproportionate influence relative to its members. Fostering partnerships with neighboring regions is another vital component of leveraging global engagement. South Asia could emulate initiatives like the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) to build strategic relationships with China, Central Asia, and ASEAN (Das, 2016). For instance, partnerships with China in renewable energy and infrastructure development could address shared climate challenges and boost economic growth. Collaboration with Central Asian nations on trade corridors and energy pipelines could strengthen connectivity and secure critical resources. Engagement with ASEAN could enhance South Asia's integration into

global value chains, leveraging Southeast Asia's manufacturing and technological expertise.

These partnerships would expand South Asia's strategic depth and position the region as a bridge between diverse geopolitical and economic hubs (Envall & Hall, 2016). By leveraging global engagement through unified representation and strategic partnerships, South Asia can enhance its regional cohesion while asserting itself as a significant global actor. These efforts would require robust institutional mechanisms, political will, sustained diplomacy, and the promise of elevating the region's global standing and fostering long-term development.

Capitalizing on the Digital Revolution

The digital revolution provides a unique opportunity for regional integration in South Asia to overcome conventional barriers and facilitate substantial collaborative efforts in economic, social, and security dimensions. With the rapid growth of digital economies, the region can leverage technologies to bring about interconnected markets, improve governance, and foster inclusive growth. Indeed, revolutionary initiatives in trade and commerce include cross-border digital payment systems. This would cut transaction costs and quicken remittances to create an atmosphere of financial inclusion. A single digital payment gateway for the SAARC nations would facilitate businesses and persons undertaking seamless transactions without dependence on conventional banking infrastructures at an improved level of economic interdependence (Mukherjee & Satija, 2020).

Furthermore, shared cybersecurity frameworks are also of utmost importance in this regard. While digital connectivity and access have increased, exposure to risks of cyberattacks and data breaches has heightened, thereby disrupting regional economies and potentially destabilizing any trust among nations. Such cooperation on cyber protocols, intelligence sharing, and training programs will increasingly help these South Asian states strengthen their defenses against cyber threats while protecting the secure exchange of information in a digital world (Malik, 2018). It indicates the commitment to regional confidence-building: a collective investment in protecting shared digital spaces. In allowing these options to come to fruition, South Asia can let digital integration become a benchmark for regionalism, whereby nations overcome their political rifts and advance together toward prosperity.

Conclusion

Europe's normative power, as Ian Manners posits, has three key drivers. The first is a conflictive historical milieu undergirded by two destructive wars of the twentieth century. Secondly, an amalgam European community that maintains statism, albeit with a robust support system of institutions. Thirdly, institutionalized and legalized processes of the EU lend adequate legitimacy to the practices and processes (Neuman & Stanković, 2019). The resultant integration of Europe as an ideal 'normative power' and the emergence of the EU as a 'community of practice' has also incentivized other actors and regions to venture and follow suit. South Asia is one such region that can imitate the normative practices of Europe. However, the South Asian region faces multifarious challenges and cannot yield the dividends of geographical contiguity. The region has remained deficient in achieving the required level of transformation in the domains of political, social, and economic integration.

The legacy of enduring conflicts and mistrust has flipped high politics as one of the leading features in interstate relations. Especially the two leading states of the

region, India and Pakistan, have long been butting for the fulfilment of fleeting strategic dividends at the regional and sub-regional levels. This enigma between regional and strategic environments has placed the regional actors in a problematic truce situation wherein enduring peace seems to be a distant objective. The prevailing mindset tends to dismiss diplomacy, viewing the willingness to engage in dialogue as a concession that implies strategic parity or diplomatic equivalence. This perspective is often seen as a sign of weakness, carrying reputational costs for political actors on the domestic front. The given scenario poses serious compulsions vis-à-vis reflection of normative practices in South Asia and the emergence of a community of practice to replicate the European model of peace and stability.

The likely pathways that can translate in South Asia, becoming a community of Practice and normative power have been underscored. To practically realize these ideational prospects and normative practices, the daunting political resolve of all stakeholders is indeed a sin qua non. The EU's rise as a normative power underscores the transformative potential of shared norms, institutional accountability, and ideational influence in shaping a cohesive and peaceful regional order. For South Asia, marred by mistrust, unresolved disputes, and a fragmented political landscape, the EU offers valuable lessons in regional integration. However, replicating the European model requires addressing deep-rooted conflicts and fostering a culture of dialogue and cooperation. The successful adoption of such a framework could pave the way for a stable, integrated South Asia, transcending its historical challenges and fostering a resilient regional order.

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The Paradox of Cyber Warfare and Clausewitz's Conception of War

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Abstract

The technological advancements of the 21st century have broadened the traditional concepts of warfare and security. This broadened notion of warfare and security contains an important element of cyberspace. Cyberspace is the virtual space created through the linkages of the internet and internet devices. Because of certain developments, cyberspace is now considered the fifth operational domain for warfare, with the other four domains being land, sea, air, and space. This new realm of confrontation has encouraged states worldwide to secure their cyberspaces and build offensive or defensive cyber warfare capabilities as per their potential. Where traditional realists argue that cyber warfare does not fit the concept of warfare (as proposed by Clausewitz), this article justifies otherwise. The study employs content analysis as a method and adopts a qualitative approach to data analysis, posing the following research question: How does cyber warfare fit Clausewitz's conception of war? In exploring this, the research hypothesizes that an in-depth analysis of Clausewitz's trinity—the elements of violence, combat, and policy—indicates that these elements are also the salient features of cyber warfare, making it a *valid* form of war despite its anomalies.

Introduction

The 21st century is widely regarded for its digitalization and technological advancements, and because of this, the global use of the internet has also been upsurging. With the growth of the global population and increasing integration, the number of internet users worldwide has also risen significantly. Data shows that internet users in the past decade increased from 1.97 billion in 2010 to almost 4.5 billion in 2020 (Kemp, 2020). On the one hand, the internet has now made access to multiple

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sources and parts of the world more accessible than ever before. On the other hand, it has come with repercussions because the more dependent the world is on the internet, the more vulnerable it will become to cyber-attacks and hacks.

As these advancements have unfolded globally, warfare and security have also evolved. Undoubtedly, cyberspace has reduced the barriers between states and given them a platform to stay connected and increase their diplomatic ties. However, cyberspace has opened the world to a new coliseum of confrontation and conflict. By redefining the nature of warfare and security, the internet and cyberspace have raised multiple security concerns for the states on a global level. Previously, wars were fought between states on the battlefields involving kinetic elements, but there has been a paradigm shift from a physical to a virtual mode of war. It is a mode of warfare that does not require physically trained warriors or battle-field experts; instead, cyber warriors can now put a state's national security at stake.

This research paper attempts to deeply explore the notion of cyber warfare through the lens of Clausewitz's trinity of war. It considers secondary sources of data, including books, journal articles, newspaper articles, and other literature on cyber warfare, to determine if cyber warfare fits the traditional notion of *war* opined by Clausewitz. In exploring this primary research question, the research considers the famous trinity of war composed of violence, combat, and policy to justify whether cyber warfare is a *valid* or *true* form. The research applies content analysis as an instrument and opts for qualitative data analysis. In applying the trinity of war to cyber warfare, the research also highlights the notions of uncertainty and friction when it comes to combat in cyber warfare. The research is significant because it contributes to the existing literature on cyber warfare, hypothesizing that although traditional definitions of war have some limitations, the in-depth analysis of Clausewitz's definition of war portrays that cyber warfare is a valid form of warfare despite its anomalies concerning traditional warfare.

Cyber Warfare

Cyber warfare is a branch of hybrid warfare that necessitates cyberspace to disrupt the enemy's critical infrastructure. Here, cyberspace is the virtual world of computers. Where traditionally, the concept of 'space' was confined to geography and territoriality, cyberspace is gradually ceasing the existence of this concept (Choucri, 2012). The notion of cyberspace is the location or virtual space that is created because of the linkage between computers on a global level (Bussell, 2013). Cyberspace is "a time-dependent set of interconnected information systems and the human users that interact with these systems" (Fang, 2018, p.3). Unlike the physical space around us, including the land, oceans, and air, cyberspace cannot be demarcated and divided into national boundaries. Sharma (2011) suggests that cyberspace falls under a subcategory of communication systems and is the same as information or communication space.

The Internet is an important component in cyber warfare because it acts as a platform that connects all electronic devices; however, technological advancements have blurred the line between the Internet and cyberspace. (Cepik et al., 2015). Even though there is no universally accepted definition of cyber warfare, and it varies from state to state and scholar to scholar, this paper highlights some important definitions of cyber warfare taken from different sources to point out how each idea differs from the other as elaborated below:

- There has been little consensus on the definition provided by Clarke and Knake (2010, p. 292) in their book *'Cyber War: The Next Threat to National Security and*

What to Do About It.' According to the definition, cyber war refers to the "actions by a nation-state to penetrate another nation's computers or networks for the purposes of causing damage or disruption." This definition generally explains the concept but lacks clarification on the involvement of non-state actors, one of the significant features that make cyber warfare distinct from previous warfare (Abdyraeva, 2020).

- According to Billo and Chang (2004), cyber warfare involves offensive and defensive cyber operations in which different units are organized outside nation-state boundaries and use electronic means to attack other networks or computers.
- Under the U.S. National Research Council's Committee on Offensive Information Warfare, cyber warfare precludes cyber-attacks that aim to gather information. On the other hand, the U.S. Department of Defense includes information-gathering cyber-attacks as part of cyber warfare (Bell, 2018).
- Similarly, one of the widely used definitions of cyber warfare is given by Jinghua (2019), who equates cyber warfare to strategic warfare in the 21st century, similar to nuclear warfare in the 20th century. This idea bestows significant importance on cyber warfare and certifies that it is an important national security concern.
- In addition, Goel (2020) incorporates international organizations into the cyber warfare realm and defines cyber warfare as "a broad term that refers to actions by nation-state actors (or other international organizations with mala fide intentions) to use hacking tools to achieve military objectives in another country" (Goel, 2020, p. 89).

Where scholars have argued that hybrid warfare is not a new concept, the elements of cyber warfare are also not entirely new. Undoubtedly, technological advancements have given rise to cyber warfare. However, the important components of cyber warfare, i.e., sabotage, espionage, and subversion, have always been a part of the conflict, even before the technological developments. The only difference cyberspace made is that of a non-violent element. Previously, espionage, subversion, and sabotage could not have been carried out without violent force or physical damage, but cyber warfare has made it possible (Rid, 2011). Likewise, it is not the first-time states have attacked adversaries' critical infrastructure. The strategy is as old as it was implemented in World War II when the U.S. aimed at Germany's critical infrastructure through air bombing by targeting their critical infrastructure (Lewis, 2002).

At the same time, cyberspace has brought dramatic changes in the domains of espionage, subversion, and sabotage, and its restrictions are not comparable to the physical element of traditional warfare (Rid, 2011). Nevertheless, as states become increasingly dependent on the internet and technology, they become more vulnerable to cyberterrorism and cyber-attacks (Lewis, 2002). As globalization increases and the world becomes increasingly interconnected, more people and systems are expected to be affected by cyber-attacks (Billo & Chang, 2004).

Peculiarities of Cyber Space.

Cyber warfare is a complex phenomenon because of virtual space and the involvement of multiple actors. It has several anomalies that distinguish it from conventional warfare. Some of these peculiarities give this form of warfare an upper edge in the war-fighting domain and make its execution easier than a physical attack.

Variety of Actors

The Internet is a considerable platform connecting millions and billions of people worldwide, which can be exploited by nation-states or non-state actors, including hackers, criminal groups, terrorist groups, or individuals for different objectives (Hathaway, 2008). Non-state actors now possess technological abilities they did not have access to earlier (Otaiku, 2018). Some sources highlight that terrorist groups tend to update their systems along with the technological advancements and have been seen attacking states that are more dependent on technology; however, some argue that since cyber-attacks are not as impactful as physical attacks in their ability to cause physical destruction, terrorist groups do not give much importance to these attacks (Wilson, 2008).

No Superpower

The territorial, naval, and aerial superiorities of a state make it a superpower in that particular *space*, but that is not the case in cyberspace. No matter how sophisticated a state's critical infrastructure is, its chances of being attacked are always high. As mentioned earlier, the more dependent a state is on the internet, the more exposed it is to cyber-attacks and hackers. Even though the criterion of cyber superpowers is yet to be defined, some scholars argue that the U.S. and China are the two key players in this domain, fighting each other. There is a disagreement between some scholars who regard the U.S. as the cyber superpower and others who regard China's capabilities as stronger. However, it is to be noted that both states are as vulnerable as the other, which makes it challenging to decide which one is a cyber-superpower. Also, states like Israel, Russia, India, North Korea, and even Iran are not far behind and can be regarded as major cyber powers. They are considered to be the states that have cyber warfare capabilities. As Chen (2010) put it, every state has the necessary weapons (software and computers) to fight a cyber war without the state being a superpower.

Cost-Friendly

Cyber-attacks do not need heavy machinery, well-equipped armed forces, and sophisticated missile technology to make an impact on the opponent. These factors defined the victory in traditional wars, but cyberspace has changed the notion. Even though technological sophistication is required for a better defense in cyberspace, that does not necessarily make states less vulnerable to cyber-attacks. The offensive cyber operations do not require a large budget to be carried out compared to the economic costs of a physical battlefield (Hathaway, 2008). Thus, even an individual with a minimal budget but good technological knowledge can put the national security of a state at stake.

Anonymity

The problem of attribution in the cyber domain is an important concern. It is also regarded as one of the factors that facilitate and encourage non-state actors and terrorist groups to launch attacks through electronic means instead of conventional ones. One cannot punish an offender if he is not identifiable (Rid, 2011). If state 'A' carries out a cyber-attack against state 'B,' state 'B' would never know if state 'A' carried out the attack. Even though the systems sometimes attribute the attack to a particular state, the sources disappear when some legal process takes place to hold the attacker state responsible (Tiirmaa-Klaar, 2011). Secondly, even if state A is accused of carrying out that attack, state 'A' can rebuff the accusation and claim that a third party attacked

without taking the state into confidence. In this way, an attacker can remain anonymous for as long as it takes, and the attribution problem remains.

No Discrimination in Targets
No warfare is more irregular than cyber warfare, and increasing technological advancements have blurred the line between cyber terrorism and cyber warfare. Cyber-attacks do not always have military objectives; sometimes, they might be directly related to civilians. For instance, cyber-attacks like information theft are directly linked to civilians and can cause insecurity among them (Cavelty, 2014). Also, technological involvement makes the risks associated with cyber-attacks enormous. Because these attacks are executed through technology, their impacts might be uncontrollable because of technological complexities. They may produce unpredictable outcomes, causing damage far more significant than expected. This is also one of the reasons there are fair chances of cyber-attacks escalating to physical destruction (Wu & Huang, 2020).

Offensive Superiority
Classical realists argue that the defensive capabilities of a state should be robust enough to allow it to retaliate in case of an offensive attack. A notable realist, Clausewitz, claims that *defense* is always better than *offense* and is more potent than offensive strategies in terms of waging war (Clausewitz, 2007). This claim, unfortunately, does not apply to cyberspace, where offensive attack already has an advantage over defense (Goldsmith, 2010). Defense is about securing the systems and keeping all the external actors out of them, but that is not possible in cyberspace because there is much unpredictability in cyber-attacks. It might be that state 'A' was expecting an information theft by state 'B,' but instead, state 'C' launched a cyber-attack on state A's critical infrastructure. Furthermore, to rule out the possibility if we argue that state A secures all its systems to avoid all sorts of cyber-attacks is an impossible thing. No matter how defensive state A's information systems are, they will always be vulnerable because of the inevitability of cyber-attacks.

The Clausewitz's Trinity: War as Violence, Combat and Policy
The notion of national security is often considered a combination of 'nation' and 'security.' This relates national security to the idea of protection, safety, and well-being of the nation, where these factors are common to all (Paleri, 2008). Thus, any attempt that directly or indirectly affects the nationals of a state is considered a threat to the state's national security. In contemporary times, cyber security is linked with the state's national security because of its ability to affect decisions, its nationals, and their daily life routines. This very argument also highlights the role of people, government, and the military regarding cyberspace and cyber warfare.

In contemporary times, cyberspace is the easiest and most effective way to disrupt the infrastructure and industries of a state (Poindexter, 2015). War is simply a form of aggression between states. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) defines 'aggression' as the use of any weapon from one state to another or bombardment from one state to another (Wilson, 2008). Looking at this idea of aggression, cyber warfare does not follow the definition provided by UNGA. This is because the characterization focuses primarily on the nation-states and does not discuss the involvement of non-state actors. Secondly, there is also no consensus about cyber

tools regarded as cyber weapons[2], which again restricts cyber warfare to infusing into this definition.

Correspondingly, some scholars question if war in the cyber domain can be considered a *true* form of war because of its inefficiency in fitting into the traditional definition of 'war' proposed by Clausewitz. According to Clausewitz's concept of war, no cyber-attack has ever occurred that could be considered an *act of war* (Hadfield, 2016). So far, the incidents that have taken place in cyberspace have not caused destruction to the threatening level, be it the number of deaths or the attacks on critical infrastructure (Valeriano & Maness, 2015). This raises concern about cyberspace being a battlefield for warfare because of the absence of physical frontlines (Missiroli, 2019). Moreover, critics argue that cyber-attacks so far have not been able to fulfill the given Clausewitz's criteria of war (Rid, 2011).

Clausewitz defines *war* as having three major elements: violence, combat, and policy; these elements correspond to the emotions of people, the chance and friction faced by the military commander, and the rational policy of the government. It can also be regarded as an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will. From the definition, it is evident that the violence (use of force), combat, and political nature (influencing the opponent's will) make a certain act *an act of war*. In order to understand if cyber warfare is a *true* form of warfare, according to Clausewitz, it is important to look at his definition of war from a broader perspective. The research will divide Clausewitz's definition into these three parts to explore each element individually.

War as an Act of Violence
In the first half of Clausewitz's definition, where he talks about the kinetic element (an act of force), it is essential to note that cyber-attacks can cause physical damage to critical infrastructures if targeted. Even though previous cyber-attacks have not been able to escalate to such an extent that they cause severe physical damage, it does not necessarily mean that future cyber-attacks will also lack the kinetic element. For instance, in contrast to all the previously designed cyber-worms[3], Stuxnet[4] was designed to target physical infrastructures specifically. Likewise, it must be taken into account that with all other traditional domains of warfare, cyberspace has been regarded as the fifth operational domain (Abdyraeva, 2020; Ebert, 2020). This signifies that conflict and warfare are inevitable in this new domain, which should be given the same importance regarding security as the other four domains of space, air, land, and sea.

Cyber warfare is inevitable, and the conception that cyber-attacks are not capable of causing as much destruction as 9/11 or Pearl Harbor sets aside the security threat fostered by cyber-attacks. Security experts in the U.S. have emphasized that a well-coordinated cyber-attack can magnify the effects of a conventional attack (Wilson, 2008). It is noteworthy that several cyber-attacks aimed at stealing credit card information among the USA's citizens have been used to financially support terrorist

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[2] A cyber weapon is any code-based instrument that relies exclusively on digital networks. It can damage their integrity or penetrate them to gather sensitive information that would be advantageous in a kinetic attack.

[3] Worm is a program replicating itself like a virus to spread to different computers via a computer network. It does not attach itself to any program or file.

[4] The U.S. and Israel designed a cyber weapon, Stuxnet, to sabotage the Iranian nuclear program by targeting ICSs (Industrial Control Systems). Stuxnet showed a level of sophistication not previously seen in malware. The Stuxnet worm was a complex malware program that could stealthily move from system to system, replicating itself and effectively reprograming critical systems while hiding the modified code from human controllers.

groups that have conventional capabilities (Wilson, 2008). In this way, the cyber-attacks contribute to financing actors that are a serious (indirect) threat to the state's national security.

It is also argued that a cyber-attack can be as fierce as a nuclear attack; cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure can also affect the states' national security. The world has already seen the episode of 'Stuxnet,' which brought the attention of security experts to cyberspace (Farwell & Rohozinski, 2011). The development of Stuxnet elucidates that cyber-attacks go beyond just disrupting critical infrastructure and can have grave consequences for a state's national security. Hence, if the kinetic element becomes part of a cyber-attack, it aligns cyber warfare with the first half of Clausewitz's definition, characterizing it as an *act of force*.

However, let us suppose that cyber-attacks can never cause physical destruction; even then, cyber war fits Clausewitz's idea of an 'act of force.' According to Bassford (2007), Clausewitz's idea of violence is not limited to physical damage and destruction; instead, it shows the presence of 'emotion' (Bassford, 2007). These emotions can also be a part of cyber-attacks and can be the reason for launching cyber operations against an opponent. For instance, many cyber-attacks between India and Pakistan were inspired by changing dynamics between both states. There have been cyber-attacks on Independence Day that sparked nationalist fervor on both sides. Likewise, bilateral tensions also motivate hackers to launch cyber-attacks. Indian hackers reportedly defaced approximately 30 Pakistani websites following Pakistan's announcement of the death sentence for Kulbhushan Jadhav, an Indian spy (Rai, 2017).

As far as 'people' are concerned in Clausewitz's social trinity, it is also noteworthy that in all the cases, people are either direct or indirect victims of cyberattacks or cyber operations. Cyber-attacks have societal implications, including the lack of trust among people in certain companies and authorities to ensure their digital security, the economic losses citizens face, and the hatred spread via hate speech and disinformation on social media (Ashraf & Kayani, 2023). It is also the people who are affected when states carry out propaganda warfare to influence public opinion, as in the case of the 2016 U.S. elections and Russia's cyber warfare against Ukraine since 2022 (Willett, 2023).

War and Combat

Combat is the second most important constituent of war, according to Clausewitz. In the light of the social trinity proposed by Clausewitz, an important part of this element (combat) is the military. In contemporary times, it is evident that the military is playing an important role in cyber warfare. The militarization of cyberspace and Artificial Intelligence (AI) is taking place at an unprecedented pace (Arif, 2021). U.S., China, Russia, and other major powers have integrated cyberspace as a crucial national security component, making it the fifth battlefield. In addition to these states, smaller states are also trying to integrate cyber warfare capabilities and foster their AI militarization to ensure their survival in a rapidly evolving cyber landscape.

The concepts of uncertainty, friction, and the fog of war are closely linked to this aspect of combat and the military domain. Clausewitz emphasized the crucial role of the military in managing the friction inherent in warfare, effectively addressing the associated risks and uncertainties. The notion of uncertainty was later taken up by various scholars of political psychology as well in order to understand the role of perceptions and misperceptions in times of conflict and wars. The prime examples are Lebow and Stein (1995), who studied the Cuban missile crisis from the point of view

of provocative deterrence, and Jervis (2017), who emphasized perceptions and misperceptions in international relations. The studies on inadvertent escalation during a crisis were also inspired by Clausewitz's notion of *uncertainty*.

As mentioned earlier, one of the anomalies of cyberspace is that it makes the identification of the attacker difficult, leading to the problem of attribution. This characteristic creates an environment of uncertainty and a fog of war, with the victim unaware of the attacker. Moreover, in cyberspace, it is challenging to maintain deterrence. This is because of the complexities of cyberspace and the identification problem (Geers, 2010). For deterrence to be successful, it is crucial to have significant information about one's capabilities and that of the opponent; however, cyberspace makes it difficult. This argument indicates that uncertainty and the fog of war, which Clausewitz emphasized, are important features of cyberspace, which makes the latter fit into Clausewitz's second element of war, i.e., *combat*.

More importantly, militaries worldwide have been actively conducting cyber operations against the opponents (Lin, 2010). The USA, despite being the champion of free and open internet and cyberspace, has been accused of conducting espionage against its allies and opponents alike, as revealed by Snowden leaks (BBC, 2014). Likewise, China, Russia, Israel, Iran, and other cyber-capable states have also enhanced their offensive cyber capabilities and built their cyber forces/armies to dominate their opponents (Netolicka & Mareš, 2018). However, another school of thought is that because of uncertainty, cyber operations will remain a supportive tool for future wars rather than being a decisive tool. This was evident in the cyber-attacks carried out by Russia during its invasion of Ukraine in 2022 (Mueller et al., 2023).

War as an Instrument of Policy

Propaganda warfare, which uses cyberspace or the Internet, is a clear example of how states use various platforms to advance their national policies, enhance their influence, or shape their opponents' decisions without force. Great powers like the U.S.[5], Russia[6], and China[7] have often used propaganda warfare. Even though propaganda warfare is mainly aimed at influencing the opinion of the masses, not the government, public pressure also has great value for the government. This relates to the use of cyberspace for propaganda warfare which influences the decision-making capability of the opponent.

Cyber-attacks can be used on different levels, from strategic to tactical, and can serve as an important source of political coercion. They can also compel your adversary to do things according to your will (Liff, 2012). Clausewitz's definition mentions that the use of force is primarily to convince your opponent to do your will, making cyber-attacks fit into the latter half of his definition. Abdyraeva (2020) argues

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[5] For instance, in 2011, The US military decided to develop software that would let it secretly manipulate social media sites by using fake online personas to influence internet conversations and spread pro-American propaganda.

[6] During the Cold War, the Soviet Union used active measures to influence nations in coercive ways distinct from espionage and counterintelligence. Active measures included disinformation, political influence operations, and controlling media and messaging with the goal of discrediting or influencing the West, which is echoed in Russia's modern-day tactics.

[7] Liu Xiaoming, who recently stepped down as China's ambassador to the United Kingdom, is one of China's most successful foot soldiers on this evolving online battlefield. He joined Twitter in October 2019 and quickly gained popularity on the platform because of his posts and retweets of his posts. Later on, it was found out that the popular support that aimed at influencing public opinion was, in fact, manufactured using fake accounts.

that one of the primary objectives of cyber-attacks is to influence the opponent's will for its national interests using offensive cyber capabilities. More and more states are trying to build strong cyber capabilities because cyberspace enables you to achieve your ambitions without engaging in a military confrontation with other states.

The alleged interference of Russia in the 2016 U.S. national elections to help Trump win the elections is one notable example that signifies how cyberspace can be used to achieve political and national objectives. Russia has long been involved in propaganda warfare and hybrid warfare against the U.S. to contain its spread in the former's surroundings. However, against adversaries grew in Putin's second term—the strategy transitioned from being related to theft to being offensive (Ziegler, 2018). A manifestation of this was the 2016 Russian interference in U.S. national elections.

Notably, cyber warfare does not encompass everyday attacks like cyber espionage and low-scale cyber-attacks but includes cyber-attacks with direct military or political objectives (Liff, 2012). This automatically makes cyber warfare a national security concern. Clausewitz also suggests that *war* is a continuation of politics through other means. The word politics itself needs to be understood more broadly rather than confining it to a narrower concept of politics. Like Clausewitz argues that war is a continuation of politics, it is important to note that politics shape war. As discussed earlier, most cases of Indo-Pak cyber-attacks are caused by bilateral tensions (Green, 2020). The new realm of cyberspace has all the essential components of politics that can be used in a quest for influence and power (Choucri, 2012).

Conclusion

The concept of warfare now incorporates cyber warfare, as does the modern concept of 'security.' Cyberspace has given states a fair chance to stay connected but has also been declared the fifth operational domain for warfare. Certain anomalies like the aspects of anonymity, low cost, non-discrimination in targets, and the involvement of various actors have made cyber security an important constituent of national security. Despite all these factors, some scholars argue that cyber warfare has so far been unable to fulfill the criterion of warfare provided by the traditional realist (Clausewitz). However, an in-depth analysis of Clausewitz's definition and concept of warfare suggests that cyber warfare fits his definition of warfare to a great extent. Thus, cyber security is an issue that needs to be looked upon by the states before their national security is jeopardized.

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Pakistan's Water Security Crisis: Challenges and the Case for Integrated Water Resource Management

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Abstract
Water security has emerged as the greatest security concern for Pakistan. Despite being endowed with abundant water resources, the country is steadily heading towards a severe water crisis due to excessive exploitation and widespread mismanagement. In the past, issues pertaining to water security were largely neglected, paving the way for its transformation into an existential threat with alarming consequences for Pakistan. The combination of inadequate water availability, deteriorating water quality, rising demand, and the compounded pressures of climate change and population growth underscores the severity of this crisis. This research examines Pakistan's critical water security challenges and explores potential future risks. The study is grounded in the theoretical framework of 'water security,' and the methodology used is the STEEPLE Analysis to foreground multifarious key factors behind burgeoning water insecurity in Pakistan. It argues that Pakistan's water crisis stems from a complex interplay of interconnected social, political, and economic factors, each with far-reaching implications. To address this crisis, the research advocates for the urgent and effective implementation of an Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) approach.

Introduction
Water is the most cardinal resource for existence, livelihood, and development. Consequently, water security continues to pose a significant challenge for states across the globe. In Pakistan, this challenge is particularly critical due to the country's heavy reliance on its agrarian economy and the Indus River Basin (IRB), which supplies the majority of its water needs (Janjua et al., 2021). However, the country is predicted to reach absolute water scarcity by 2025 and become the 23rd most water-stressed state

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globally by 2040, as asserted by national and international reports, respectively (Ahmad et al., 2022). Given the severity of this issue, it has not received the attention it warrants. Even when recognized, practical measures to address the crisis have been minimal, further exacerbating an already dire situation.

The declining water resources, driven by complex factors, are propelling Pakistan toward a severe water crisis, embittering water insecurity with grave social, economic, and political implications. The water resources of the country have come under great stress from population explosion, urbanization, industrial development, and environmental pollution (Rashid et al., 2018). The poor water management and ever-enhancing climate variability have made Pakistan extremely vulnerable to natural disasters, droughts, and floods (Habib-ur-Rahman et al., 2022). The rampant corruption and prevalent water theft have further fueled the issue (Ullah et al., 2025). Moreover, Pakistan's fraught history of water disputes—both with India and among its provincial units—has politicized the water issue, raising serious security concerns about restricted water flow and the potential for water-related conflicts (Michel, 2020).

In this context, this paper examines the following key research questions: How do social, technological, economic, environmental, political, legal, and ethical factors individually contribute to the challenges of water security in Pakistan? Furthermore, how does water insecurity influence social cohesion, political stability, and economic development in Pakistan, and what strategies can be developed to mitigate these impacts?

Conceptual Foundations of Water Security

The concept of 'water security' can be traced back to post-war diplomacy in the 1940s, during the remapping of former colonial empires (Sun et al., 2024). It was formally articulated as a policy challenge in the 'Hague Ministerial Declaration on Water Security' released at the 2002 World Water Forum. This declaration defined water security as the protection and improvement of coastal, freshwater, and other ecosystems; ensuring access to sufficient, safe, and affordable water for a productive and healthy lifestyle; promoting environmental stability and political security; and safeguarding against water-related hazards (World Water Council, 2022). Subsequently, the Ministerial Declaration at the 2006 World Water Forum emphasized the urgency of making sanitation and water a national priority. It reaffirmed the commitment to achieving the goals of Integrated Water Resources Management (Jun 2010; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2022).

The United Nations-Water, created for harmonizing efforts for water-related matters, equates water security with the masses' ability to ensure uninterrupted access to sufficient quantities of passable quality water, adequate quantity for the wellbeing of humans, maintaining livelihoods, economic and social development, cinching safeguard against water-related calamities together with water-borne pollution. Moreover, water security emphasizes ecosystem preservation in a climate of political stability and peace (UN-Water, 2013). This definition categorically endorses the exigency to manage uncertainty and risk among water security's key elements. According to the Global Water Partnership, the key elements of water security include:

- *Water Safety:* Ensuring acceptable water quality in terms of odor, taste, and appearance that does not threaten human health.
- *Water Access:* Guaranteeing unrestricted access to water for all individuals, encompassing public spaces, healthcare facilities, schools, and households.
- *Water Affordability:* Providing sufficient and safe water at a reasonable cost.

Beyond these elements, water security encompasses multiple dimensions that collectively contribute to achieving national water security (Siwar & Ahmed, 2014).

- *Economic Water Security:* Supporting sustainable economic development through water resource management.
- *Household Water Security:* Ensuring adequate water supply for domestic needs.
- *Climate Water Security:* Addressing the impact of climate change on water resources.
- *Resilience to Water Calamities:* Strengthening the ability to withstand water-related disasters.
- *Urban Water Security:* Managing water supply and sanitation in urban areas.

Pakistan's limited and erratic water supply highlights the growing challenge of water insecurity in the country. Water availability in the country faces multiple risks, notably from climate change and pollution (Ahmed et al., 2020). Moreover, the water demand is rapidly increasing due to urbanization and the ballooning population. Consequently, the supply and demand imbalance drives Pakistan towards water insecurity. The strain on water resources is further exacerbated by inefficient water management practices, declining availability, and deteriorating water quality, collectively undermining the country's overall water security (Khan et al., 2024). These interconnected issues threaten all three pillars of water security—safety, access, and affordability—raising profound concerns about the nation's survival, livelihoods, and sustainable development.

Pakistan's Water Security: Current Status and Future Outlook

The River Indus and its six tributaries (Chenab, Ravi, Beas, Sutlej, Jhelum, and Indus) are the primary sources of water supply in Pakistan. According to the World Bank (2019), Pakistan's renewable water resources amount to approximately 228.9 billion cubic meters (BCM) annually, with the Indus Basin contributing the largest share, 96.3%, followed by the Kharan Desert at 1.3%, and the Makran coastal drainage accounting for 2.4%.

Surface water supplies in Pakistan are derived from three primary sources: 75% from the three western rivers, 1.5% from eastern rivers, and the remainder from rainfall and runoff within the country. The western rivers heavily depend on Himalayan glaciers, which provide about 50% of the downstream surface water, making Pakistan highly reliant on glacial flows (World Bank, 2019).

Renewable groundwater resources in Pakistan are estimated at approximately 74.2 BCM, recharged by river flows, rainfall, irrigation return flows, and canal seepage. Sector-wise, national water consumption is distributed as follows: 94% for agriculture, 3% for domestic use, and 3% for industrial purposes (Watto et al., 2021).

Water stress, water scarcity, and absolute water scarcity are key thresholds for assessing the availability of water resources relative to a country's population. According to the Falkenmark Indicator, a nation is water-stressed if its per capita water availability falls below 1,700 cubic meters per year. When renewable water resources drop below 1,000 cubic meters per person annually, the nation is categorized as water-scarce, and levels below 500 cubic meters signify absolute water scarcity (White, 2012).

Pakistan is on a trajectory toward acute water shortages, dramatically declining per capita water availability from 5,260 cubic meters per year in 1951 to approximately 1,000 cubic meters in 2016. By 2025, this figure is projected to decrease

to 860 cubic meters, shifting Pakistan's status from water-stressed to water-scarce (Ministry of Water Affairs, Pakistan, 2022). Additionally, the water shortfall, which stood at 11% in 2004, is expected to surge to approximately 31% by 2025, underscoring the need for 22-25 BCM storage capacity to address the widening gap between water demand and supply (PIPS, 2022).

Studies published by the Research in Water Resources (PCRWR) have warned that if poor water management and inadequate conservation practices persist, Pakistan could face absolute water scarcity by 2025 (Ashraf, 2018). Furthermore, the 'World Resources Institute' ranked Pakistan as the 23rd most water-stressed country, with a water score of 4.48. This score reflects the ratio of water withdrawals to the total renewable water resources available, highlighting the critical challenges the country faces (Luo et al., 2015).

STEEPLE Analysis of Pakistan's Water Security

The methodology used in this research is STEEPLE Analysis, which examines Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental, Political, Legal, and Ethical factors and their implications for a given sector or domain (Baruah, 2020). In Pakistan, these elements collectively reinforce one another, intensifying the ongoing water crisis.

Social Aspects

Social factors include population explosion and urbanization, having a colossal impact on the water resources of Pakistan. According to the United Nations, Pakistan ranks as the world's fifth-most densely populous state, with 220.9 million people (United Nations Pakistan, 2021). Its population is estimated to become 242.2 million by 2025, putting an unprecedented strain on the receding water resources (Yaqoob, 2021). Population explosion will compound the ever-enhancing water demand-supply gap due to the incessant rise of water demand. As per the International Monetary Fund Report, by 2025, the water demand of Pakistan will increase to 274 million acre-feet (MAF), but the water supply will remain constant at 191 MAF, causing a gap of 83 MAF between water demand and supply (IMF, 2015). The water demand in Pakistan is rising at a 10% rate, and the key reason behind that is the burgeoning population. The current water withdrawals from surface and groundwater resources that have surged to 175 km^3 further exacerbate the situation. The extraction rate is also extremely high, particularly for groundwater resources. For example, 83% of total groundwater while 74% of total surface water is extracted in Pakistan (Janjua et al., 2021).

The ratio of water withdrawal from renewable water resources, including groundwater and surface water, has increased significantly, from 62% in 1977 to 82% in 2017. With population growth, this ratio is expected to increase further, depleting already limited water resources. Urbanization is also accelerating, with the urban population projected to rise from 37.2% in 2020 to an alarming 52.2% by 2050 (Maqbool, 2022). At an annual urban population growth rate of 3%, nearly half of Pakistan's population will reside in urban areas by 2025.

This rapid urban expansion presents significant challenges for metropolitan areas, especially those lacking the infrastructure to provide basic services such as water and sanitation. Unplanned and unchecked urbanization will exacerbate pressures on provincial governments to ensure adequate service delivery, further straining limited resources (Khalid & Khan, 2020).

A striking example is Karachi, Pakistan's largest metropolitan city, with a population of approximately 18 million. As a water-stressed city, Karachi faces a water demand ranging from 720 to 972 million gallons per day (MGD), while its current

supply is only 670 MGD. Population growth and the rising rate of urbanization are the primary drivers of this water shortage. Furthermore, high levels of internal and international migration to Karachi are expected to increase water demand, intensifying the city's water crisis in the future (Khan et al., 2019).

Technical aspects

Another key factor behind water insecurity in Pakistan is inadequate water storage. Pakistan suffered a loss of 120 BCM (Billion Cubic Meters) of water during the 2010, 2012, and 2014 floods alongside the substantial impact on people, crops, and infrastructure, primarily because of limited storage. Three major reservoirs (Tarbela Dam, Mangla Dam, and Chashma Barrage) of the country have a water storage capacity of 9% of annual river water flows, which is far less than the world's average storage capacity of 40% (Ashraf, 2018). According to Indus River System Authority spokesman Muhammad Khalid Rana, Pakistan gets 145 MAF (Million Acre Feet) of water per annum but, due to limited storage capacity, saves merely 13.7 MAF (Akbar et al., 2021).

The existing capacity of reservoirs is decreasing rapidly because of sedimentation with an annual loss rate of 0.2 MAF. Sedimentation diminishes the water flow regulation, reduces storage volume, and obstructs the dams to achieve various objectives such as hydropower generation, flood mitigation, and irrigation. Deposition of sediment has decreased the storage capacity of Tarbela Dam by 40.58%. Ergo, the water carryover capacity of these reservoirs is 30 days, which is constantly declining. (Ateeq-Ur-Rehman et al., 2018). The storage capacity of Chashma Barrage has decreased to 60% of the total storage capacity as per the 2011-2012 hydrographic survey (Ali & Shakir, 2018)

Augmenting water insecurity in Pakistan is also linked to another technical problem: the system's efficiency. The irrigation system is poorly managed, plunging the overall efficiency to below 40% (Latif et al., 2016). Canal seepage brings about salinity, water logging, pollution, and freshwater depletion. Moreover, it increases the level of the groundwater table, causing irrigation inefficiency, waste of productive land, and a hike in operational costs (Shah et al., 2020). Pakistan faces the loss of 26 MAF through distributaries, canals, and minors, whereas the losses from water courses through evaporation, overtopping, transpiration, and seepage are 45 MAF (Khoso et al., 2015). Moreover, the loss of irrigation water during transportation in channel and field application stands at 60% (Shams, 2022).

Economic Aspects

Pakistan's water crisis is deeply intertwined with the structure of its economy. It is classified as the most water-intensive economy in the world, consuming the highest volume of water (in cubic meters) per unit of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) compared to any other country. As an agrarian economy, the agriculture sector forms a cornerstone of Pakistan's economy, contributing 19% to GDP and accounting for 80% of the country's total export earnings. Additionally, the sector employs over 42.3% of the national workforce (Agriculture Department Government of Punjab Pakistan, 2022). However, agriculture is also the primary driver of water scarcity, utilizing 93% of Pakistan's freshwater resources for agricultural production (Mumtaz & de Oliveira, 2019).

Out of Pakistan's total 22 million hectares of arable land, only 6 million hectares rely on rain, while the remaining 16 million hectares are irrigated. These irrigated lands contribute nearly 90% of the country's agricultural and livestock

production. The irrigation network spans the IRB, supporting Kharif (summer crops) from May to October and Rabi (winter crops) from November to April. Key crops such as rice, wheat, sugarcane, cotton, pulses, fruits, and vegetables are cultivated on this land. For these water-intensive crops, 27% of irrigated land depends on surface water supplies, while the remaining 73% relies solely on groundwater, making Pakistan the world's third-largest consumer of groundwater (Qureshi, 2020).

Pakistan is also the fourth-largest country globally in groundwater withdrawal, with the Indus Basin Aquifer—the country's primary groundwater source—recognized as the most overstressed aquifer in the world (Razzaq, 2022).

The cultivation of cash crops, particularly rice, has been a major factor in depleting water resources. Experts estimate that 4,000 liters of water are required to produce 1 kg of rice, resulting in water costs of approximately Rs. 10 billion to earn just 2 billion (Pakistan Rupees) through rice exports ("Fighting Water Scarcity," 2017). This unsustainable water usage for low-value agricultural production has exacerbated the water crisis, highlighting the need for strategic reforms in Pakistan's agricultural practices to mitigate the depletion of vital water resources.

Environmental Aspects

Climate change presents an unrelenting and long-term external threat to Pakistan's water security, significantly impacting average water availability and inflow variability. Over the coming decades, climate change is expected to intensify the frequency and severity of both droughts and floods. Rising temperatures are projected to increase water demand by 5% to 15% (a threefold rise) by 2047, in addition to the rising demand caused by economic growth and population expansion. Coastal storms and rising sea levels will further exacerbate seawater intrusion into the Indus Delta and coastal groundwater in the Lower Indus Basin (LIB). Meanwhile, rapid glacier melting in the Upper Indus Basin (UIB) will increase the risk of glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs) (Nie et al., 2021; Young et al., 2019).

Pakistan's geographical location amplifies its vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate change. Situated at 69.34° N longitude and 30.37° E latitude, it lies in the Northern and Eastern Hemispheres, north of the equator. This positioning makes Pakistan heavily reliant on snow and ice melt for its water supply. However, glaciers and snow in the country's mountainous regions are melting alarmingly, diminishing freshwater availability. Compounding this issue is the vulnerability of the Hindu Kush-Karakoram-Himalaya (HKH) range, which feeds the Indus Basin—the lifeline of Pakistan's water resources. Climate change is the driving force behind glacial fluctuations observed in the 21st century (Malik et al., 2012; Khan et al., 2024; Ashraf, 2025).

In 1991, the *Working Group on Himalayan Glaciology* predicted that Pakistan could lose its glaciers by 2035 if deglaciation continues unabated. Similarly, a World Bank report in 2005 warned that glaciers could retreat significantly within five decades, leading to water scarcity and desertification (Shahzad et al., 2020). With over 7,000 glaciers and 3,000 glacial lakes, Pakistan faces a grave risk, with 36 glacial lakes identified as highly dangerous, exposing nearly 7 million people to potential flash floods during warm months like July and August (Akbar, 2020).

The concept of 'Peak Water' offers insight into the long-term effects of glacial decline on water security. As glaciers shrink, runoff during the melt season initially increases, reaching a peak phase followed by a terminal phase and an irreversible decline phase (Geopolitical Monitor, 2019). In Pakistan, the rapid recession of glaciers

is expected to initially cause flooding due to the lack of adequate storage capacity. However, reduced glacier mass in subsequent decades will lead to diminished water availability, further aggravating the country's water crisis.

Political Aspects

The political factors contributing to Pakistan's water insecurity can be categorized into three primary dimensions, as outlined below.

Hydro-Politics Between India and Pakistan

Water has been a highly politicized resource between India and Pakistan since independence in 1947. The partition of the subcontinent along religious lines overlooked the hydrological dynamics of the Indus River Basin (IRB). This oversight, coupled with the disputed territory of Kashmir—home to the headwaters of the Indus River System—has exacerbated tensions. Early attempts to resolve water disputes, as envisioned by the British, failed due to the nascent governments' inability to reach an agreement.

Partition rendered Pakistan the lower riparian state, while India gained control over the canal headworks of the IRB. This sense of insecurity heightened in 1948 when India blocked the flow of the Sutlej River into Pakistan. Pakistan relies heavily on the IRB to meet its industrial, agricultural, and domestic water demands. However, India's increasing number of projects on the western rivers allocated to Pakistan under the 1960 Indus Water Treaty (IWT) has heightened Pakistan's vulnerability.

India has constructed or planned multiple dams on the Jhelum, Chenab, and Neelum Rivers, including contentious projects like the Kishenganga, Sawalkot, Ratle Dams, and the Wullar Barrage. Pakistan asserts that these projects will substantially reduce water flows, posing a significant threat to its irrigation systems and domestic water supply (Salik, 2015; Qureshi, 2017).

Another rising concern is Afghanistan's potential damming of the Kabul River Basin, which could reduce water inflow into Pakistan. Despite its critical contribution to the Indus flow, no formal water-sharing agreement exists between Pakistan and Afghanistan, adding another layer of insecurity.

Inter-provincial Water Disputes

Domestically, water distribution among Pakistan's provinces has become increasingly contentious, exacerbated by shrinking groundwater resources and political interests obstructing conflict resolution. The Sindh province, as the lower riparian unit, accuses the upper riparian provinces Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) of appropriating its water share from the IRB via canals like the Taunsa-Panjnad and Chashma-Jhelum. Sindh alleges that Punjab uses water excessively and violates international water-sharing agreements and regulations.

The Kalabagh Dam project is a significant point of contention, with Sindh opposing it over concerns that it would create water shortages, reduce the water-storing capacities of Haleji Lake and Manchar Lake, and disproportionately benefit Punjab (Imran, 2021).

Issues of Water Governance

Weak governance exacerbates Pakistan's water challenges. Fragmented management, outdated infrastructure, lack of water-sharing agreements, and political interference prevent effective utilization and equitable distribution of water resources. Addressing these governance challenges is essential to resolving inter-provincial and external hydro-political conflicts, critical to improving Pakistan's water security. Poor water

governance has severely undermined water management in Pakistan. According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), water governance encompasses the institutional, political, and administrative rules, processes, and practices essential for decision-making and implementation in water management. It also involves articulating stakeholders' interests and holding decision-makers accountable for their actions (OECD, 2018).

Despite receiving significant grants and loans from USAID, the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank to improve water governance, Pakistan's water resources remain poorly managed. Key issues include inequitable and inefficient allocation of water resources, inadequate sanitation infrastructure, unregulated groundwater extraction, and significant water wastage due to a deteriorating irrigation system (Ali, 2021).

The National Water Policy 2018 marked a positive step towards addressing Pakistan's growing water security challenges (Ministry of Water Resources, Pakistan, 2022). However, the policy falls short of comprehensively outlining fundamental priorities or providing an effective mechanism for achieving its stated objectives (Abubakr, 2018). These shortcomings reflect the broader systemic issues that impede effective water governance in the country.

Legal Aspects

Legal frameworks play a critical role in managing water resources; however, both inter-state and intra-state arrangements in Pakistan exhibit significant limitations, contributing to the country's water insecurity.

At the inter-state level, the 1960 Indus Water Treaty (IWT), backed by the World Bank, documented the Indus River's water distribution between India and Pakistan. The treaty also delimited the obligation and rights of both states for water usage (Vater, 2021). The four components of IWT are as follows:

1. The treaty allocated Beas, Satluj, and Ravi (regarded as eastern rivers) to India, while Pakistan was given Chenab, Indus, and Jhelum (the western rivers)
2. To assist Pakistan, a financing plan was proposed for the construction of Tarbela Dam, Mangla Dam, and seven link canals in Pakistan
3. IWT allowed India to use the western river's hydroelectric potential with restrictions imposed on the storage capacity of dams to avoid their adverse impact on Pakistan
4. Another key aspect is related to the dispute resolution mechanism, and in case of failure, the treaty enshrines the role of an impartial arbiter, either ICA-International Court of Arbitration or the World Bank (Riffat & Iftikhar, 2015)

IWT proves to be a landmark treaty for resolving the transboundary water issue, but since the 1990s, the increasing water stress has placed a substantial strain on the treaty. Moreover, there are two crucial issues which the treaty does not address. The first issue is the division of shortages between Pakistan and India during the dry season, when water flow reduces to half compared to the wet season. The second issue is the impact of storage on Chenab River flows in Pakistan (Hassan, 2017). Additionally, the IWT's clause permitting India to utilize the western rivers for hydropower generation under specific restrictions has created multiple challenges for Pakistan. India's aggressive development of water infrastructure in Jammu and Kashmir, such as the Uri Hydroelectric Project, Dumkhar Project, Nimoo Bazgo Project, Chutak Barrage, Pakal Dul Dam, and Burar Dam, threatens to reduce water further flows into Pakistan. These

projects risk rendering Pakistan's canal system ineffective, severely impacting its agricultural sector (Shahzad et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the Kishenganga Project on the Neelum River and the Wular Barrage on the Jhelum River present similar challenges. Both projects prioritize water storage during winter when water flow is naturally low, exacerbating Pakistan's water scarcity. These developments underscore the urgent need for revisions and updates to the treaty to address contemporary challenges effectively.

At the state level, the *Water Apportionment Accord 1991* is the most significant legislation for resolving inter-provincial water disputes in Pakistan (Anwar & Bhatti, 2018). The accord allocated water from the Indus Basin as follows: 47% to Punjab, 42% to Sindh, 8% to KPK, and 3% to Balochistan. While it was an important step towards equitable distribution, the accord has failed to address key grievances, particularly those of Sindh.

One major shortcoming is the absence of provisions to ensure a minimum environmental flow (E-flow) through Sindh and into the Arabian Sea, which is critical for maintaining the ecological health of the Indus Delta. Additionally, Sindh accuses upstream provinces, particularly Punjab, of excessive water extraction for irrigation and dam construction, which reduces downstream water flows ("Pakistan's Provincial Water Disputes," 2016).

Another critical issue is the Accord's inflexibility. The water allocation formula is based on the average water flows from 1977 to 1982, making it outdated and unable to adapt to current challenges such as climate change and population growth. Furthermore, the accord lacks clearly defined operating rules and control mechanisms for managing water distribution infrastructure.

The most significant omission, however, is the failure to address the sharing of water shortages during periods of scarcity. This neglect has fueled conflicts between lower riparian provinces like Sindh and upper riparian provinces like Punjab and KPK, exacerbating inter-provincial tensions (Naushad, 2021). Addressing these gaps is essential for achieving more effective and equitable water governance within Pakistan.

Ethical Aspects

Ethical issues, such as water theft and corruption, significantly exacerbate Pakistan's water crisis, depriving millions of people of access to clean and sufficient water.

Water theft is a pervasive issue, particularly in Karachi, Pakistan's largest city, where inadequate water supply has become the norm. The city requires 1.1 billion gallons of water per day (BGD), but its supply capacity is only 550 million gallons daily. The primary water source, Keenjhar Lake, is located 150 km from Karachi, and water reaches the city through canals to main pumping stations before being distributed via pipelines or water tankers. However, this system is plagued by theft. According to the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB), an estimated 42% of the water is either stolen or lost before it reaches end users (Riiter, 2018).

Initially introduced as a short-term solution to Karachi's water supply challenges, the water tanker system has evolved into a significant part of the distribution network. While KWSB legally operates 10 hydrants, the city is burdened by nearly 100 illegal hydrants controlled by the 'water tanker mafia.' This group draws water illicitly and sells it at exorbitant prices, making clean water unaffordable for many poor residents. The illegal water industry in Karachi is estimated to exceed $0.5 billion in value, turning water theft into a lucrative business at the expense of public welfare (Hashim, 2022).

Corruption in Pakistan's water sector is another critical ethical challenge. According to surveys conducted by Transparency International (TI) in 2003 and 2006, the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) ranked as the second most corrupt institution in the country. The 'Global Corruption Report' by Transparency International (2008) further highlighted the impact of widespread corruption on various aspects of the water sector, including irrigation, drinking water services, hydropower, and water resources management.

Corruption in these areas exacerbates issues such as poor access to potable water, inefficient irrigation systems, and hindered economic development. Funds intended for water infrastructure and services are often misallocated or embezzled, leaving critical projects underfunded and perpetuating water scarcity for millions of people (Transparency International, 2008).

Implications of Water Insecurity for Pakistan

Water insecurity in Pakistan has multifaceted ramifications, impacting its social, economic, and political fabric. Socially, inadequate or lack of access to water not only jeopardizes the health and well-being of individuals but also exacerbates existing inequalities, disproportionately affecting vulnerable segments of society. Economically, water insecurity deepens economic disparities due to its adverse effects on the agricultural sector, a fundamental source of livelihood in the country. Politically, challenges associated with water security have the potential to amplify governance issues and fuel conflicts over scarce water resources, thereby threatening national stability.

Water scarcity significantly worsens Pakistan's already dire food security situation. According to the 2021 Global Food Security Index, Pakistan ranked 75th out of 113 states (Economist Impact, n.d.). Rapid depletion of glacial reservoirs in the country is projected to cause a 40% reduction in the flow of the Indus Basin Rivers, which sustain the agricultural sector, thus posing a significant threat to food security. Since 2018, a 45% decline in average rainfall has severely impacted Kharif crops, including rice, millet, maize, and sugarcane. This escalating food stress has led to widespread undernourishment, particularly undermining women's health (Mansoor & Mukhtar, 2021).

The scarcity of healthy and safe drinking water has forced most of Pakistan's population to rely on unsafe water sources. Approximately 80% of the population consumes polluted water, while only 20% have access to clean drinking water (Nabi et al., 2019). The primary source of water contamination is fecal matter and sewage, while secondary sources include chemicals from fertilizers, pesticides, and industrial effluents discharged into water bodies. Waterborne diseases caused by human activities account for 80% of all diseases and 33% of total deaths in the country (Daud et al., 2017). Pakistan ranks 80th out of 122 states regarding drinking water quality, primarily due to poor management and insufficient monitoring of water safety standards, which poses significant public health risks. The consumption of polluted ground and surface water leads to numerous diseases, including typhoid, hepatitis, diarrhea, and intestinal worms, resulting in an estimated GDP loss of 0.6-1.44% or 25-28 billion (Pakistan Rupees) in annual income losses (Bashir et al., 2021).

The economic impact of water scarcity extends beyond GDP and income losses. The unavailability of water for agricultural production threatens Pakistan's agrarian economy, which depends on irrigation.

Migration is another consequence of the water crisis in Pakistan, which has a severe impact on livelihoods. According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department, as mentioned in the report by Islamic Relief on Climate-Induced Migration in Pakistan: Global Discourse, Local Realities and Governance, nearly 33% of the population from districts such as Washuk, Kharan, Noshki, and Chagai have migrated due to water scarcity (Islamic Relief Worldwide, 2021). Similarly, residents of the Chitral District have been forced to relocate because of land infertility and water shortages, creating an economic crisis for those left without income sources or access to education. Additionally, flash floods and torrential rainfall have compelled communities in Gilgit-Baltistan to migrate to safer areas. Future predictions are even more alarming. For example, if sea levels continue to rise at the current rate, Karachi is projected to be submerged by 2060, with Badin and Thatta potentially underwater by 2050 (Durrani, 2020).

Water insecurity also has the potential to trigger conflicts within Pakistan and between Pakistan and India. Both nuclear-armed neighbors have a long-standing rivalry over the Indus Basin water resources. Climate change, a significant driver of declining water availability, exacerbates this transboundary water dispute, which could escalate into a broader conflict (Shams, 2022). South Asia's central water reserves originate in the disputed Kashmir region, increasing the risk of regional instability. The Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) has historically helped manage this conflict. However, climate-induced water scarcity could undermine the treaty's effectiveness, resulting in severe and potentially irreversible repercussions for both Pakistan and India (Taimur, 2022).

Domestically, water scarcity has the potential to spark intra-state conflicts, posing threats to Pakistan's national security. Karachi serves as a test case, where rampant water theft and shortages have already strained governance. The government's inability to manage the water crisis could lead to widespread urban violence (Ahmar, 2021). Additionally, the economic ramifications of water conflicts are breeding divisions among communities, exacerbating inter-provincial rivalries over water resources, and further threatening national unity (Shams, 2022).

Way Forward

The Integrated Water Resources Management approach is the panacea for Pakistan's water crisis. IWRM signifies a process that encourages the harmonized management-cum-development of land, water, and associated resources for the maximization of equitable social and economic welfare while keeping eco-system sustainability in consideration. Being the cross-sectoral policy approach, IWRM promotes integrating environmental, industrial, and agricultural water demands into water catchment management, emphasizes inclusive participation of all water users, and encourages equilibrium in ecosystem sustainability, economic efficiency, and social equity. Additionally, it emboldens women's role in water management (United Nations Environment Program, 2020). Regarding Pakistan, IWRM shall include the following key priorities.

Water Tax

Water rates in Pakistan are currently insufficient, with inadequate collection mechanisms failing to cover even the essential Operation and Maintenance (O&M) costs. Over time, this deficiency has been exacerbated, resulting in a substantial gap in the water sector's financial sustainability. To address this, enhancing farmers' paying capacity for appropriate water rates is imperative to ensure O&M requirements are met effectively.

The exceedingly low Abiana (water charges imposed by the Provincial Governments of Pakistan for irrigation) not only encourages consumers to use water wastefully but also limits the availability of funds necessary for proper O&M. Increasing water taxes is essential to ensure fair coverage of O&M costs, promote responsible water consumption, and support the long-term development of water sector infrastructure. This adjustment will help create a sustainable framework for managing water resources more effectively in the future. Furthermore, water 'metering' is indispensable for measuring the amount of utilization in the agricultural, industrial, and domestic sectors to ensure pragmatic management of water resources.

Irrigation System and Changing Cropping Patterns
The conveyance efficiency shall be improved in Pakistan, and for that purpose, concrete control- structures must be installed to improve the watercourses, minors, and distributaries. Moreover, it is crucial to ameliorate surface irrigation techniques and methods to enhance water application efficiency. Bed and furrow irrigation techniques can be compulsory for growing grain and row crops such as maize, wheat, and cotton in plain areas. Additionally, drip irrigation remains the most modern and efficient technology for saving water and increasing yield, particularly for rice crops. Other techniques like zero tillage and precision land leveling can improve water productivity.

Variability in cropping patterns should be considered for water conservation and bridging the demand-supply gap. Shifting from water-intensive food crops (rice, maize, and wheat) to less water-intensive cash crops is essential for conserving water and boosting the economy.

Effective Groundwater Regulation and Building Water Reservoirs
Excessive groundwater abstraction must be regulated through a stringent legal framework entailing proper pricing and monitoring for tube well installation. Controlled groundwater extraction is essential for recharge and ensuring a sustainable water supply.

The construction of multipurpose water reservoirs should be a top priority for the government. These dams can fulfill various purposes such as water storage, water supply for various sectors, water regulation and flood control, and hydropower generation. This would resolve the issue of water scarcity, curb the hazardous impact of climate change, and, most importantly, reduce the burden on the economy linked with fuel imports for electricity generation. The sites for these dams can be Tarbela's downstream and northern areas.

Conflict Management of Inter-Provincial Water Disputes
The conflict among the provinces over water distribution can be tackled by applying mathematical models proposed by various authors (Janjua & Hassan, 2020). For instance, the bankruptcy game technique can be employed as a water allocation mechanism given the competing water demands amidst critical scarce conditions.

Hydro-diplomacy and Water Governance
In addition, hydro diplomacy and negotiations are key to developing a consensus among provinces. The Pakistan-Afghanistan agreement over water sharing is necessary to avoid transforming differences into water disputes. Furthermore, diplomatic efforts to exchange water data with India shall not cease.

Effective coordination and collaboration among the various actors are indispensable for the sustainable management of water resources. Existing regulations should be improved, and significant policy and legal framework lacunas must be filled.

Additionally, government departments' institutional and human capacity shall be enhanced, coupled with water users' structured participation.

Awareness Campaigns & Public-Private Partnership

Campaigns to generate awareness and convey the water insecurity issue shall target different sectors. This approach can sensitize the issue and encourage contribution towards the dual cause of water conservation and management. Moreover, the government should encourage the PPP Public-Private partnership, particularly for water recycling and optimal water pricing, to overcome financial constraints and ensure sustainable resource management.

Conclusion

Pakistan's water security predicament underscores the gravity of the challenges confronting the nation. The widening gap between water demand and supply, exacerbated by persistent shortages, propels the country toward acute water insecurity. This situation is expected to deteriorate further due to social, technical, economic, environmental, political, legal, and ethical factors. Among these, population explosion and the changing hydrology of the Indus Basin are the most critical, acting as catalysts that amplify the adverse effects of other contributing factors. With declining per capita water availability driven by a growing population and the impacts of climate change, the demand for water in industrial, domestic, and—most critically—agricultural sectors is surging. This escalating demand puts enormous strain on the government's ability to effectively manage water resources, with potentially dire social, political, and economic consequences. Urgent and drastic policy interventions are needed to address these challenges; otherwise, the country risks severe upheaval, jeopardizing both human and national security.

A comprehensive and integrated approach to water conservation and management is essential to meet the diverse demands of various sectors. Addressing all the aforementioned factors is imperative for devising a holistic strategy. Altering and regulating water-use behavior through innovative water policies and appropriate institutional reforms can significantly mitigate water insecurity. Such measures would stabilize the situation and pave the way for sustainable development and accelerated economic growth. Although achieving this vision appears complex and incremental, it is feasible through implementing an IWRM policy swiftly and effectively. This approach would foster efficient use of water resources, ensuring their sustainability for future generations while addressing the multifaceted challenges of water security.

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Khalistan Movement in India and its Regional Implications

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Abstract

The Khalistan movement is a struggle for an independent state by the Sikh population residing in the Punjab province of India. The struggle for Sikh independence persisted following India's independence in 1947, fuelled by perceptions of systemic discrimination and atrocities committed against the community by the Indian government. This movement stands out as one of India's most active separatist movements, garnering significant regional and international attention. The movement has far-reaching political, social, and strategic implications at the regional level. It influences India's internal dynamics, exacerbating tensions and impacting governance. Regionally, the movement's ramifications extend to various circumstances and perspectives, shaping the geopolitical landscape in South Asia. Primarily, it affects the complex relationship between Pakistan and India, adding another layer of complexity to their already strained relations. A descriptive-analytical approach has been employed to analyze and understand the Khalistan movement and its regional implications. This method aims to comprehensively examine the movement, exploring its historical roots, contemporary dynamics, and the broader geopolitical context in which it operates. This approach is being sought to unravel the complexities surrounding the Khalistan movement and its multifaceted impact on the region.

Introduction

The Khalistan Movement is a longstanding separatist movement in India, with its roots in Punjab, aiming to establish a separate homeland for Sikhs. It is deeply ingrained in

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ethnic and traditional values, dating back centuries, seeking political and cultural sovereignty and national identity. The movement has seen numerous violent clashes between Sikhs and the Indian government. It is particularly significant as it represents the aspirations of the Sikh minority, numbering around twenty million. The demand for a separate homeland, primarily in Punjab, holds immense political and strategic significance, given the region's importance to India. The movement enjoys considerable popularity and activity both within India and internationally.

Since the 16th century, Khalistan has been renowned as the homeland for Sikhs. Even today, Sikhs continue to struggle and fight for their homeland, separate identity, and sovereignty. They have produced great leaders who have played significant roles in uniting Sikhs as a strong nation. The movement has been marked by great sacrifices made by its followers. However, India perceives this movement as a significant security threat.

In the 1980s, the assassination of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh guards and the military operation of Blue Star by the Indian government in Amritsar's Golden Temple intensified the movement. This incident sparked immense popularity and enthusiasm for the cause of the Sikh freedom movement.

Furthermore, the Punjab province of India is immensely important as a hub for agriculture and trade, contributing significantly to the country's economy. Its fertile lands are often referred to as the 'breadbasket of India.' Its geographical location enhances its strategic significance, as it shares borders with Pakistan's Punjab province and the contested region of Kashmir. This proximity influences cross-border relations and adds to its geopolitical and security importance in South Asia.

The research employs a descriptive-analytical approach to evaluate several themes related to the Khalistan movement. These include exploring the movement's background, examining the reasons behind the demand for a separate homeland, examining the significance of the Punjab province for India, assessing constitutional rights regarding the movement, analyzing atrocities against the Sikh community in India, and analyzing. Additionally, the research delves into the movement's implications for regional peace and security and its impact on India-Pakistan relations.

Significance of Punjab for India's Growth and Stability

Punjab is located at a strategically vital border position and shares boundaries with occupied Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, and Rajasthan within India and Pakistan to the west. Its historical narrative dates back to ancient times, when it witnessed the influence of diverse tribes and invaders shaping its culture and religion. Moreover, Sikhism, introduced by Guru Nanak in the fifteenth century, is the predominant religion of Punjab (Singh & Bhardwaj, n.d.). Punjab, with its historical connections to Hinduism, is predominantly Sikh populated but also home to a significant Hindu population, particularly among lower castes. Punjabi is the official language, while Hindi is widely spoken (Singh & Bhardwaj, n.d.).

The state is divided into three regions and encompasses major cities like Amritsar, Ludhiana, and Patiala. Punjab's economy thrives on agriculture, contributing significantly to India's grain and milk production alongside a diverse industrial sector. Despite historical prosperity, the region has faced challenges, including insurgency and political tensions, particularly surrounding the demand for Khalistan (Singh & Bhardwaj, n.d.). While stability has been achieved since the mid-1990s, Sikhs continue to advocate for religious recognition and express concerns about demographic shifts in Punjab (Sidhu, 2017).

Economically, Punjab was prosperous pre-independence and remains vital to India's economy. It contributes significantly to grain and milk production, supplying various agricultural products like rice, wheat, fruits, and vegetables. Around 40% of the population is engaged in agriculture, benefiting from well-irrigated land supported by government infrastructure. Punjab also meets its energy needs through hydroelectric plants and other sources. Despite insurgency impacting industrial and agricultural sectors, Punjab remains one of India's most developed provinces, boasting low poverty rates and receiving recognition from the Indian government for its achievements (Dutta, 2023). Culturally, Punjab celebrates a rich heritage through various religious festivals such as Dussehra and Diwali and ceremonies honoring Sikh Gurus and saints. These events reflect the deep-rooted traditions and values contributing to Punjab's vibrant cultural tapestry (Singh & Bhardwaj, n.d.).

Since 1995, Punjab has experienced relative stability, with the Shiromani Akali Dal winning elections and restoring local governance. However, Sikhs continue to face challenges regarding their religious identity. Many feel insecure because the government and Hindus do not recognize Sikhism as a separate religion, threatening their cultural autonomy. As a result, Sikhs demand religious recognition to maintain their distinct identity.

Historical Understanding of the Khalistan Movement and Demand for Separate Homeland

The history of 'Khalistan' or 'Khalsa' traces back centuries. Before the 16th century, Sikhs referred to Punjab as 'Khalistan' or 'Land of Khalsa,' envisioning it as their autonomous homeland. This concept was rooted in the teachings of their Gurus, who nurtured Sikh identity and the dream of an independent state. Guru Gobind Singh[3] proclaimed Punjab as Khalsa in 1699, instilling in Sikhs the belief that ruling over Punjab was their divine right. Punjab has also witnessed Sikh leadership, maintaining its independence ("What happened during 1984", 2018). The Sikh religion, introduced by Guru Nanak in the 15th century, has a significant presence in north-western Punjab and is dispersed across India and globally. The Sikh population in the 2020 census stands at 20.8 million (Minority Rights Group, 2021).

The Sikhs have a history of warriorhood, exemplified by leaders like Banda Singh Bahadur, who liberated parts of Punjab from the Mughal Empire in the 18th century. Despite struggles against the Mughals and Afghans, Sikhs rose to dominance in the 18th century. Maharaja Ranjit Singh expanded Sikh territory, but British colonialism ended their rule in 1849. After Ranjit Singh, Sikh leadership weakened, leading to priest control of Gurdwaras until the Akali Movement in 1920 demanded reform (Singh & Bhardwaj, n.d.; "What happened during 1984", 2018; Singha, 2000). The Sikhs also resisted British rule, culminating in the Massacre of Amritsar. Post-Independence, Sikhs sought a separate state, facing challenges during partition (Asia Samachar, 2016; Singh & Bhardwaj, n.d.; United Nations High Commissioner for (Refugees, 2023). They settled in the Indian Punjab, where the idea of Khalistan emerged. This led to brief autonomy before reintegration in 1956 (Singh & Bhardwaj, n.d.).

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[3] Guru Gobind Singh is among the last ten Gurus (The most respected and believable religious leaders) of the Sikh Community who introduced new beliefs in the Sikh religion. He established in 1699 Khalsa (literally meaning pure) community who were religiously trained and were fighters.

The Khalistan movement, aimed at establishing an independent Sikh state in north-western India, has evolved ("What happened during 1984", 2018). It was initiated by Sikh leaders such as Tara Singh and Sant Fateh Singh after Independence (Singh & Bhardwaj, n.d.). In the 1960s, it was known as the 'Home Rule Movement' and later gained momentum in the 1980s as the Khalistan movement. The Indian government attempted to quell the movement through various measures, including dividing Punjab in 1956 based on language, which led to protests from Sikhs demanding a separate Punjabi-speaking state. Riots and violence ensued, with Akali Dal leader Tara Singh leading the 'Punjab Suba Movement ("Explained: What led to the 1955", 2021; Shaikh, 2015). The movement paused during the 1965 Indo-Pak war, but Sikh grievances persisted. Eventually, Punjab was divided into Punjab, Haryana, and Himachal Pradesh in 1966, leading to further controversy over Chandigarh (Angelo, 1999, p.18; Singh & Bhardwaj, n.d.).

In 1966, despite Sikhs constituting the majority in Punjab, they were politically fragmented into two main factions. The first group, comprised mainly of farmers, supported the Shiromani Akali Dal, advocating for special privileges and protection for Sikhs. However, they faced stiff opposition from a party aligned with the Congress party. The second group, consisting of urban Sikhs who were affluent landowners, backed the Congress party under the leadership of Indira Gandhi.

In the 1980s, Indira Gandhi exploited these divisions among Sikhs to bolster support for her Congress party in Punjab's general elections and to consolidate control over the state legislature. Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale emerged as a prominent Khalistan movement leader, gaining international attention in the 1990s ("What happened during 1984", 2018). Despite fading in the 1990s, the movement continues to have a presence, advocating for Sikh political and social rights (Shaikh, 2015).

During the 1980s, the Khalistan movement in India, seeking a separate homeland for Sikhs, escalated into insurgency and rebellion (Shaikh, 2015; Mogul, 2023). Human Rights Watch reported significant human rights violations during the early 1980s riots, with Sikhs committing atrocities against Hindus in Punjab, where Sikhs formed a majority. In response, the Indian army also violated human rights by killing thousands of Sikhs. Despite this, the Khalistan movement grew more assertive.

Another prominent leader, Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, was born in 1947 and spearheaded efforts for Sikh independence until he died in 1984. Trained in Sikhism at the Bhindran Taksal seminary, he became its head and advocated for Sikh sovereignty. Bhindranwale gained government support to counter the influence of the Shiromani Akali Dal, a popular Sikh political party. He emphasized Sikh history and nationalism, contrasting with the Akali Dal's peaceful negotiation approach.

Bhindranwale opposed the Nirankari sect, which aimed to merge Sikhism into Hinduism, and preached a return to Sikhism's core tenets. He also clashed with the Arya Samajis, who advocated for Sikhs to abandon traditional practices. Bhindranwale's actions garnered both support and opposition amid growing discontent with economic and governance issues. Violence erupted, including targeted killings of Arya Samajis and supporters of Hindu groups.

Bhindranwale's arrest in 1982 led to riots and his subsequent retreat to the Golden Temple, establishing it as his headquarters. Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi ordered Operation Bluestar in 1984 to remove Bhindranwale and his militants from the temple, considering them a security threat (Mogul, 2023). Bluestar resulted in a violent conflict between Bhindranwale's forces and the Indian military, causing significant casualties and damage to the Golden Temple. Subsequent operations aimed

to quell Sikh militancy, leading to further violence and controversy, including allegations of human rights abuses by the Indian army ("What happened during 1984", 2018). By 1987, radical Sikhs had established a clandestine government and launched a rebellion for Khalistan. In response, the Indian government dissolved the Punjab government and imposed presidential rule (Tempest, 1987).

The rise and impact of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, a radical Sikh leader, and the subsequent events leading to the Bluestar military operation in 1984, which aimed to remove him and other Sikh militants from the Golden Temple in Amritsar. The operation resulted in significant casualties and ignited a violent backlash, including the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards. This event led to anti-Sikh riots across India, causing further loss of life and property (Mogul, 2023). Despite the Indian government's intention to crush the Khalistan movement, the operations fuelled resentment among Sikhs, both within India and abroad. The use of excessive force and disregard for Sikh religious sentiments deepened grievances, contributing to continued tensions in Punjab.

Recently, the movement has continued under the leadership of new figures, such as Amritpal Singh (Mogul, 2023; Bhardwaj, 2019). Amritpal Singh, drawing inspiration from Bhindranwale, has become a prominent figure in the movement, leading protests against the Indian government and calling for Sikh rights. In March 2023, Sikhs' demand for a separate homeland was once again strengthened when hundreds of Sikhs took to the streets of Punjab, armed with sticks and swords, demanding a separatist homeland named 'Khalistan.' To control the law-and-order situation, Indian military forces were deployed in different districts of Punjab, resulting in the arrest of more than a hundred Sikhs and the blocking of internet services across the province. The spiritual leader of this protest was Amritpal Singh, who motivated people through his revolutionary ideas and united them for a separate homeland ("How India's hunt for Amritpal Singh," 2023a; Roche, 2023). The Sikhs are demanding a separate homeland for the following reasons:

- Demanding a separate homeland for political representation, religious freedom, and opposing government interference in their state matters (Mogul, 2023). In their view, Sikhs were once a distinct nation and kingdom and still possess the right to self-governance. They argue that Sikh religious practices and beliefs lack adequate protection, with adherents facing pressure to convert to other religions and instances of desecration of their sacred texts. Punjab, where 27 million people (58 %) adhere to Sikhism, is considered a religious state for them (Dutta, 2023).
- Additionally, Sikhs face cultural and traditional discrimination in India. Constitutionally, they are not allowed to live according to their religion and culture, experiencing discrimination, particularly under the BJP Modi government, which has leaned towards Hindu nationalism. Currently, hundreds of thousands of Sikhs live abroad due to religious and political discrimination faced in India for decades. These discriminatory practices have strained relations between Sikhs and the Indian state (Ali, 2023).
- Recognition of their identity as a separate nation in an independent homeland (Mogul, 2023). According to them, the Indian government perpetrated genocide against them in the 1980s, a bitter incident still remembered in their history. The Sikh nation vehemently opposed being integrated into India by Britain.
- The Sikh community is concerned about growing unemployment, drug addiction, and discriminatory farmer laws. In their view, unemployment is persistent, and

farmers' grievances are increasing, leading many people to seek opportunities abroad and negatively impacting economic growth (Dutta, 2023).

Sikh Diaspora in Support of Khalistan

The intensity of the separatist movement 'Khalistan' is high both within India and among Sikh communities residing outside the country, where they actively work for the cause of this movement. Most Sikh populations reside in Britain, Canada, and Australia, with a total Sikh population of 25 million scattered across the globe (Mogul, 2023). Sikhs living abroad have significantly strengthened this movement by providing financial support ("How India's hunt for Amritpal Singh," 2023a). Many organizations support this movement, and the Indian government has designated these organizations as terrorist groups under the country's law, known as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

The Indian government views this movement as a significant challenge to its national security. Indian embassies in Britain and the US have been attacked by Sikhs residing there. They have torn down the Indian flag and replaced it with the flag of Khalistan. Sikh protests have also been reported in Canada against the perceived violations of the Indian government and in support of a separate homeland, as most Sikhs are settled in the US, UK, Canada, and Australia for better job opportunities and salaries. A significant number of individuals strongly support the Khalistan movement. During various consensus-building efforts, they have frequently cast their votes favouring a separate homeland within India.

Furthermore, protests erupted when the young Sikh leader Amritpal Singh was apprehended under the National Security Act. During the search, thousands of paramilitary soldiers were deployed, and internet services were shut down to locate him ("Amritpal Singh: Who is he," 2023b). Following his arrest, protests erupted in India and abroad, with Sikh communities organizing demonstrations in cities such as London, San Francisco, Canada, and Canberra. In San Francisco, protesters stormed the Indian Consulate, placed two Khalistan flags inside, and vandalized the premises by breaking glass and windows. Similar incidents were reported at Indian consulates in London, Australia, and Canada (Laskar & Jha, 2023).

Over time, the organizations advocating for the Khalistan movement, such as Babbar Khalsa, All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF), World Sikh Organisation (WSO), and International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF), received support primarily from the Sikh Diaspora residing in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and other European countries.

Rights of Sikhs in the Indian Constitution

In the Indian Constitution, the Sikh religion is referenced in certain contexts alongside Hinduism. Article 25 has been a subject of debate, raising concerns regarding its interpretation and the implied association of Sikhs with Hindus. Therefore, Sikhs have been demanding recognition as a separate religious identity in the constitution for a long time. Sikhs oppose the integration of Sikhs into Hinduism, believing that Hindus are marginalizing their identity. They pledge not to allow this and vow to use all peaceful means to protect themselves and their rights (VOA, 2009). Sikhs often advocate for amendments to *Article 25(2)(b)* of the Indian Constitution, which they argue does not fully recognize the distinct identity of the Sikh religion. Sub-clause (1) of *Article 25* affirms the right of all individuals to profess, practice, and propagate their religion, subject to public order, morality, and health considerations. *Sub-clause (2)*, however, empowers the state to enact laws for:

> Regulating or restricting any economic, financial, political, or other secular activities associated with religious practice, and (b) providing for social welfare and reform or throwing open Hindu religious institutions of public character to all classes and sections of Hindus. The second part of Article 25 (2) (b) empowers the state to make any law and restriction upon minorities.

Sikhs believe that their religion cannot be equated with Hinduism, nor should it be considered a subset of Hinduism due to fundamental differences in beliefs and practices. For example, in Hinduism, certain sects may restrict access to their places of worship based on caste distinctions. In contrast, Sikhism promotes inclusivity and welcomes individuals from all backgrounds into their religious spaces. Sikhs advocate for recognizing their distinct culture and religion, arguing that they should not be classified under Hinduism. As part of this advocacy, they call for removing every article or provision that suggests their affiliation with Hinduism (Tandon, 2023).

On various occasions, members of the Sikh diaspora have expressed frustration with the Indian Constitution by burning flags and chanting slogans such as 'Sikhs are not Hindus' while voicing their demand for the creation of Khalistan. Furthermore, prominent Sikh leader Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, serving as the legal advisor to Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), has stated that the Indian government is committing severe atrocities against the Sikh community to suppress their freedom movement and struggle for a separate religious identity. He referenced the 1984 genocide of Sikhs during Operation Bluestar, carried out by the Indian government to quell demands to amend Article 25(b) of the constitution. Throughout the current decade, judicial killings of Sikhs have continued as part of this background. Pannun emphasized that the only solution to this discrimination is the establishment of Khalistan, a separatist state for Sikhs. He argues that Sikhs, being the fifth largest religion in the world with 28 million followers, have the right to a separate state. Dr. Bakhshish Singh Sandhu, President of the Washington-based Council of Khalistan, has echoed these sentiments, asserting that Article 25(b) of the Indian constitution exposes India's claims of secularism and democracy as false ("Sikh separatists protest against India," 2019; "Who is Gurpatwant Singh Pannun," 2023).

However, the Indian government has granted administrative powers to Sikhs over Gurdwaras. On March 16, 2016, the Sikh Gurdwaras Amendment Bill was approved in the Rajya Sabha by the Minister of Internal Affairs, Rajnath Singh. This bill amended the Sikh Gurdwaras Act of 1925, delegating administrative, management, and election powers to Sikhs. The Sikh Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) was established as the authoritative organizing and management body, creating separate administration and management committees for various Gurdwaras located in Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Chandigarh, etc. The SGPC and all other sub-committees are empowered to organize and manage the Gurdwaras for the Sikh community and to conduct and arrange elections for them (PRS Legislative Research, 2016).

Additionally, a Sikh organization known as 'Sikhs for Justice' (SFJ)[4] is very vocal and advocates for the Khalistan movement and protecting Sikh community rights.

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[4] SFG was established by Sikh leaders. Its main purpose is to secure the rights of the Sikhs and accelerate the separatist movement for an independent state for Sikhs known as Khalistan. To achieve this aim, this organization held a plebiscite in different foreign cities like London, Melbourne, New York, and Sydney. All sections of the referendum had extensive participation from those who voted for a separate motherland.

This organization is currently conducting a referendum targeting Sikhs residing abroad. Its objective is to assert the right to self-rule for Sikhs, a notion supported by the UN Charter and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). According to SFJ, the UN regulations recognize the Sikh community's distinct religious identity, culture, heritage, language, and history, all rooted in Punjab, India ("Sikh separatists protest against India," 2019).

India's Accusations of Pakistan Supporting Sikh Separatists

On September 30th, 1981, five Sikhs hijacked a passenger airplane carrying 111 passengers en route from Delhi to Amritsar as part of their campaign for a separate homeland under the Khalistan movement. Without authorization, they diverted the aircraft to Lahore. The hijackers demanded the release of their imprisoned associates, who were detained on charges of inciting unrest in India. Holding 45 passengers hostage, they insisted on the release of their comrades. After releasing 66 other passengers, Pakistan's government conducted a commando operation, successfully arresting the hijackers. Subsequently, these individuals were executed by Pakistani law ("Pakistanis end Sikh hijacking," 1981). India expressed appreciation to Pakistan for its decisive action in this matter.

Nevertheless, India continued accusing Pakistan of supporting Sikhs seeking a separate homeland, providing them with weapons, training, and financial assistance for their cause. In 1977, India accused Pakistan's President, General Zia-ul-Haq, of showing heightened hospitality toward Sikh pilgrims visiting Pakistan, including hosting them at the President's house and offering gifts to foster goodwill (Aziz, 2015). However, concerns arose as Sikhs had published a map of Khalistan that included parts of Pakistan's Punjab. In response, General Zia directed his government to monitor Sikh visitors closely.

In June 1984, following Operation Blue Star, Dhillon was expelled from India by the Indian government. He relocated to the United States, where he held citizenship. Despite his expulsion, Dhillon frequently visited Pakistan during this period, receiving a warm welcome and hospitality from political leaders with whom he had good relations. This action by Dhillon drew fire from the Indian government, which accused Pakistan of supporting militants against India (Aziz, 2015). India further alleged that Pakistan provided military training and financial assistance to Sikh fighters. Pakistan, however, repeatedly assured India that it did not support Sikhs seeking a separate homeland and had never trained them. Despite these assurances, India continued to place strain on Pakistan over this issue.

Furthermore, the Press Trust of India, India's largest news agency, released a report blaming the US for supporting and participating in the Khalistan movement with Pakistan. The report alleged that during Nixon's presidency, a covert plan known as the Covert Action Plan was established in collaboration with Pakistan's government under General Yahya Khan to create Khalistan, a separate state for Sikhs in India's Punjab. Raman (2007), a retired Indian RAW officer, briefly discussed the plan in his book *The Kaoboys of R & W*. He claimed that the United States encouraged the Sikh separatist movement for Khalistan. According to Raman, Sikh leader Jagjit Singh Chauhan, allegedly motivated by US support, relocated to the UK and rebranded the Sikh Home Rule Movement as Khalistan.

It was said that General Yahya Khan reportedly invited Chauhan to Pakistan and presented him with religious gifts to garner support from the Sikh community. Chauhan also visited the US, briefing journalists and media on human rights violations

in India and meeting with UN officials. These meetings were allegedly organized by the US National Security Council Secretariat, led by Henry Kissinger. During Vice President George W. Bush's visit in 1984, India's government protested these claims, which were subsequently rejected (Aziz, 2015).

During the government of Benazir Bhutto in 1988, General Hameed Gul, the Director General of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), suggested to Benazir Bhutto to support the Khalistan movement in India's Punjab. General Gul proposed this as a means to counter any efforts by India to support separatist movements within Pakistan. Initially, Benazir Bhutto agreed to the suggestion. However, later on, in an attempt to improve relations with India, Benazir Bhutto decided to reverse course. It is believed that she handed over all secret information regarding the Khalistan movement and activities of Sikh leaders to India's Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, through a special envoy. With this information, Rajiv Gandhi was able to effectively deal with the Sikh insurgency and bring it to an end (Aziz, 2015).

The Sikh community holds significant influence in the UK and the US. To address this, India's secret agencies are actively working abroad, particularly in these countries, with the primary goal of building diplomatic relations with Sikh Communities to counter their campaigns for the separatist Khalistan movement. Furthermore, these agencies aim to identify organizations covertly funding the Sikh diaspora. India alleges that Pakistan's intelligence agencies are involved in inciting the Sikh community to demand a separate Khalistan state, providing drones and financial support for weapons in Punjab (Sikh Coalition, 2024).

Prime Minister Imran Khan inaugurated the four-kilometer free visa Kartarpur corridor for the Sikh community. The corridor connected Dera Baba Nanak in India's Gurdaspur district with Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Kartarpur, Pakistan. This fulfilled a long-standing demand of the Sikh community across the border (Syed et al., 2021). Approximately 3500 Sikh pilgrims were granted free visas to celebrate Guru Nanak's 549th birth anniversary (Pakistan High Commission, n.d.). The corridor was expected to improve relations between India and Pakistan, which had been strained since the 2008 Mumbai attacks. It was anticipated to increase people-to-people contacts across the borders and boost mutual trade (Syed et al., 2021). The Indian government hesitated to fully support Pakistan's initiative, fearing it might strain relations between Muslims and Sikhs. India has long believed that Pakistan is covertly supporting Sikh separatist movements.

Access to the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Kartarpur allows Sikhs to engage in religious practices and connect with their spiritual heritage. Additionally, the corridor opens up job opportunities for the Sikh community, both in terms of employment directly related to managing the corridor and indirectly through the potential growth in tourism and related industries. The corridor's establishment represents a significant milestone for the Sikh community, fulfilling a long-standing aspiration for easier access to this sacred site. Overall, the Sikhs see the Kartarpur corridor as a positive development that facilitates their religious practices and holds promise for economic benefits and opportunities (Islam, 2018).

Discussion: Regional Implications of the Movement
The Khalistan Movement is a separatist effort by the Sikh community in India to establish an independent state. Sikhs, numbering about 27 million, are a minority within India's 1.42 billion population. However, their significant concentration in the Punjab region, a crucial province, enhances their demographic and political

influence. This regional majority in Punjab is pivotal to the movement's goal of creating an autonomous Sikh state, emphasizing the community's strategic importance in the Khalistan Movement. The separation of Punjab as a separate state would result in significant strategic and economic losses for India.

This movement poses a persistent security challenge for the Indian government for several reasons: First, Punjab is a crucial province for India, known for its agricultural productivity, cultivated land, and overall development. Second, Punjab shares borders with Pakistan and Kashmir, making its separation a significant security and strategic concern for India. Third, the Separation of Punjab could have healthy implications for the situation in Kashmir, where separatist movements have persisted for decades.

Despite a smaller population, Sikhs have effectively advocated for their rights in India and internationally. Their protests have spotlighted India's democratic and secular claims, often leading to international criticism and reputational damage for the country.

The Sikh community has shown a strong determination for an independent state; their aspirations for a separate state, similar to Southern Sudan's independence, are evident. Southern Sudan, with a minority Christian and non-Muslim population, achieved independence through a referendum in 2011, mainly with support from the U.S. The success of the Khalistan Movement could inspire other separatist movements across India, potentially escalating tensions and destabilizing the country further.

The prospects for cordial and friendly relations between Pakistan and India remain low despite making valuable efforts in Islamabad, such as connecting two Gurdwaras across the border and providing free visa facilities for Sikhs.

The hostile situation in Indian Punjab, where Sikhs demand recognition of their constitutional right to a separate state, plays a crucial role in determining the cordiality of relations between Pakistan and India. These two nations share decades of enmity and a balance of power and have fought three wars over Kashmir, which remains a bone of contention. The Sikh community seeks justice for past injustices, including the Sikh genocide and atrocities committed during Operation Bluestar and after the assassination of Indira Gandhi. Therefore, until the grievances of the Sikh community are addressed and resolved by the Indian government, the likelihood of achieving cordial relations between Pakistan and India remains low.

The Khalistan movement and Sikhs' aspirations for a separate state would likely continue to be a significant source of tension, even if the Indian government were to cease all discrimination and fully recognize their constitutional rights. Sikhs perceive their historical right to rule over Punjab as dating back to a time before British colonial rule when they had their kingdom. The desire to revive this historical era with all its glory forms a central part of the Sikh vision for Khalistan.

The Sikhism protests, the Khalistan movement, and the calls for a separatist state such as Khalistan have significantly tarnished India's image as a peaceful, democratic, secular, and human rights-oriented state. The recent events have drawn focus to the internal discord and dissatisfaction within India, historically seen as a symbol of democracy and religious harmony. The calls for Khalistan and the subsequent demonstrations have underscored deep-seated issues and grievances within the Sikh population, prompting concerns about India's capacity to address these concerns impartially and comprehensively. In sum, these occurrences have called into question India's portrayal as a paragon of peace, democracy, secularism, and human rights at home and abroad.

Additionally, India has been accused of mistreating and discriminating against its minorities. As a member of the United Nations, India must enact laws that support and encourage the development of minorities, as per UN agreements. However, it has been criticized for violating these principles by suppressing and discriminating against minority groups (Ali, 2023; Amnesty International, 2023). Furthermore, Sikhs also advocated for government recognition of all minorities within the state, including Muslims, Christians, Dalits, and other communities. This demand is particularly significant given that Sikhs form the majority population in the north-western region of Punjab. Additionally, the Sikh diaspora is sizable, with approximately 240,000 Sikhs residing in Indian-occupied Kashmir and around 80,000 living across various European countries. The growing international presence of Sikhs strengthens their calls for greater recognition and inclusion of minority groups in their local and global contexts (VOA, 2009).

Conclusion

The Khalistan Movement represents the struggle and demand of the Sikh community in India for a separate state. It seeks to establish a separatist state primarily in Punjab and other regions where Sikhs are in the majority. The movement gained significant international attention during the 1980s. Its impact extends beyond India's borders, influencing politics, society, security, and India's peaceful image. The Khalistan issue adds new diplomatic and security dimensions to the longstanding rivalry and history of wars between Pakistan and India. It adds another layer of complexity to the relationship between the two nations, influencing their interactions across different spheres. The Khalistan Movement traces its origins to historical grievances and the aspirations of the Sikh community, evolving in response to perceived injustices and marginalization, notably in the Punjab region. Despite fluctuations in intensity over time, the Khalistan Movement maintains its significance, shaping regional dynamics and impacting the bilateral relations between Pakistan and India.

The Khalistan movement traces its roots back centuries in Sikh history. Various leaders and events have shaped it over time. Notable leaders include Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, who gained prominence during Operation Blue Star at the Golden Temple. Currently, Amritpal Singh is among the leaders advocating for Khalistan. Sikhs view the demand for Khalistan as their fundamental right, rooted in their distinct national identity. They seek constitutional recognition as a separate nation, religion, and culture. Sikhs demand protection of their religious and cultural identity, as well as justice for past atrocities and genocides perpetrated by the Indian government. The Indian government's actions against Sikhs, including high atrocities and severe violations, have tarnished India's peaceful, democratic, and secular image. This has repercussions regionally and internationally, introducing new diplomatic and security perspectives in India-Pakistan relations.

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Reevaluating Conventional Strategies: Harnessing Traditional Structures to Counter Violent Extremism in Pakistan

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Abstract

Civil-military relations constitute a complex area of international relations through the interaction of military institutions, civil society, and other governmental bureaucracies. Civil-military relations investigate the dynamics of engagement between the military and the general public, as well as the obligation of society to scrutinize the foreign and military strategies of the government. Traditional structures, including informal associations, ethical standards, and communal conventions, have played a pivotal role in Pakistan's efforts to quell violent insurgencies. These structures have substantially contributed to effectively eliminating extremist ideologies in cooperation with the military. The article explores the significance of a collaborative partnership between traditional structures and military organizations in combating insurgency and, ultimately, successfully eliminating terrorism. Three fundamental groups compose the traditional political system in Pakistan: the *Jirga*, the *Lashkar*, and the Clergy. Since 2012, this structure has been employed by the military across multiple tiers to suppress insurgencies, predominantly in the FATA, Swat region, Dir, and other districts where the authority of the state is at risk. The strategic alliance between the military and traditional structures is critical for combating insurgency.

Keywords

Traditional structures, counter violent extremism, Jirga, Lashkar, counterinsurgency, Pashtunwali

Introduction

Civil-military relations have been discussed for decades in international relations, with traditional structures playing a significant role. Throughout history, there has been a

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notable and direct engagement between civilians and the military and between kingmakers and guards. This interaction has led to several inquiries and discussions within the global political sphere about determining governance and establishing rules. These relationships offered both institutions the chance to collaborate to improve social circumstances. In certain instances, the aspirations and objectives of individuals may align under a common category, thereby facilitating the attainment of their intended purpose. The concept of civil-military relations refers to the complex dynamics between military institutions, civil society, and other governmental bureaucracies. Civil-military relations comprehensively examine the interactions between the military and society and the societal responsibility to observe government, foreign, and military policies. The efficacy of civil-military ties in mitigating violent insurgency has been demonstrated by implementing various measures.

Violent insurgency refers to the process of rationalizing and legitimizing acts of violence within ideological frameworks. It represents the violent expression of opposition to insurgent or extremist groups by individuals or groups that either support or oppose their cause. Such opposition is often rooted in various domains, including political and religious ideologies. To effectively counter insurgencies, both military and civilian leaderships employ a combination of formal and informal governance structures.

The three primary pillars of governance—the executive, legislature, and judiciary—constitute formal structures providing institutional governance and decision-making frameworks. In contrast, informal structures are traditional systems rooted in local customs and practices. These traditional structures have played a pivotal role in combating insurgencies in Pakistan by facilitating collaboration between military and civilian leadership.

Traditional mechanisms such as *Jirgas*, *Lashkars*, and the clergy have been integral to civil-military relations in addressing violent extremism. These structures, deeply embedded within local communities, have historically served as effective tools for conflict resolution and counterinsurgency efforts. Exploring how these mechanisms have been integrated into civil-military strategies in Pakistan and assessing their efficacy in addressing extremism remain critical areas of inquiry.

Traditional structures observe practices that include unofficial organizations, codes of conduct, conventions, ideals, and systems that keep society stable (Yamin, 2019). These conventional frameworks greatly assisted Pakistan in eliminating extremist ideas and insurgencies. These structures unite a particular tribe and facilitate the exercise of the writ of state among their tribal community. An instance of this can be observed in Pashtun society, where a set of guidelines is called 'Pashtunwali' (Benson & Siddiqui, 2014), and it carries considerable prestige within the Pashtun tribe. It promotes cohesion among individuals and contributes to the establishment of societal norms and values. Informal structures of this nature are present in all regions and tribes of Pakistan, serving as advantageous assets when confronted with military or state aggression stemming from internal or external challenges.

The society of Pakistan is gravely threatened by violent extremism, which has further complicated matters of national security and stability. Approximately 70 thousand casualties have been attributed to violent extremism in Pakistan since 2001 (SATP, n.d.), placing the nation among the top five nations on the Global Terrorism Index (Vision of Humanity, 2023). These grim statistics underscore the pressing need for effective counterinsurgency measures. Studies have accounted for those traditional structures in counterinsurgency in Pakistan and found that these informal/traditional

structures when coordinated with the military, play a significant part in effectively eradicating extremist beliefs within the country (Iqbal & Alam, 2020). For example, during Operation Zarb-e-Azb (2014-2017), the military's collaboration with tribal *Jirgas* in North Waziristan enhanced intelligence-gathering efforts and facilitated the removal of insurgents from key territories.

This paper focuses on the importance of a cooperative relationship between traditional structures and the military in countering insurgency and the relationship between traditional structures and the military assist in effectively eradicating terrorism. Their assistance in identifying the specific regions where these ideologies are prevalent was invaluable, and their collaboration with the military was instrumental in establishing harmony in the area. The traditional political system in Pakistan comprises three fundamental groups: *Jirga*, *Lashkar*, and the clergy (Yousaf & FurrukhZad, 2020). Since 2012, the military has utilized this structure at various levels during times of ongoing insurgencies, primarily in the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) region and other belts where the authority of the state is threatened. The military's strategic coalition with traditional structures is essential in countering insurgency.

This study also acknowledges limitations in its methodological framework. The research primarily relies on secondary data from policy papers, case studies, and reports on counterinsurgency operations. While these sources provide valuable insights, a lack of first-hand empirical data may affect the granularity of findings. Future research could benefit from fieldwork or interviews with stakeholders utilizing traditional counter-insurgency structures.

Conceptual Framework

Defining Insurgency

It is important to define 'insurgency' and set it apart from comparable terms like extremism and terrorism before diving into the frameworks. David Galula (2006) describes insurgency as a protracted struggle conducted methodically, step by step, to attain specific intermediate objectives, finally leading to the overthrowing of the existing order. Organized political goals, frequently intended to undermine the state's legitimacy or sovereignty, are a component of insurgency. Usually, it incorporates political, social, and psychological aspects along with military operations.

Insurgency stresses a more comprehensive approach that exploits terrorism as one of many instruments, whereas terrorism frequently concentrates on using violence to accomplish ideological aims. The term 'extremism,' on the other hand, describes ideas that support drastic changes—not always through violence. For example, the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militancy can be categorized as insurgency since it uses guerilla tactics and political subversion in addition to its stated objective of undermining state authority.

This paper examines the significance of collaborative relationships between traditional structures and the military in counterinsurgency through the lens of two theoretical frameworks. These include David Galula's 'Laws of the Coin' mentioned in his famous book 'Counter Insurgency Warfare; Theory and Practice' (Jacobs, 1964; Vrooman, 2005a), which covers the theoretical framework in four steps:

First, according to the laws of the coin, public support is necessary; the principal purpose of counterinsurgency is to gain support from the population. The second step is to motivate individuals who are prepared to offer full support in

counterinsurgency measures. This will allow them to organize and counterbalance the opposing minority more effectively. Third, once you have successfully gained the populace's support, it is essential to establish that this support is conditional on the acts you take in the military. Your activities may lose this support if they are unpleasant to the population. The final point is that it is essential to consistently acquire and keep the public's support in various sectors by utilizing an active minority (Reeder, 2016).

According to Galula, support from the population is necessary for counterinsurgency, and the engagement of minorities is how this support arrives. The implementation of these laws is a manifestation of Pakistan's military policy to resist insurgency, which involves the utilization of traditional structures to eliminate dangers that disrupt the peace in the region and spread extremist ideas. This demonstrates how counterinsurgents modified their COIN strategy in response to the existing threat (Vrooman, 2005b). Through qualitative data derived from secondary sources, the research attempts to explain the role of traditional structures in working with the military to combat insurgency.

Figure 1. Galula's Law of Coin
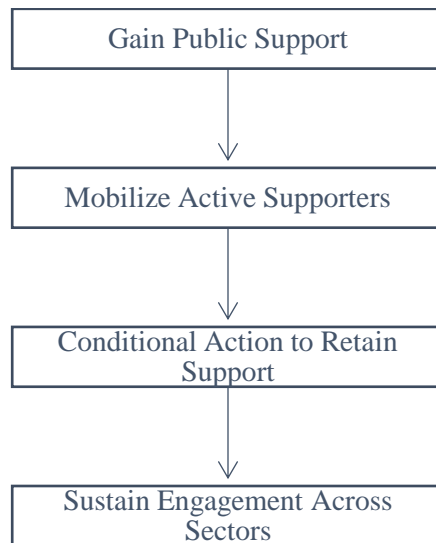
Source: Author

The second theoretical framework is given by Michael C. Desch, namely 'Military, Civilian Preference in Response to the High External Threat' (Desch,1998). The author identified several conditions in which military and civilian preferences align in response to a significant external threat. The conditions are mentioned as follows:

- *Convergence:* Civilian and military leaders' interests converge in response to the severe external threat, and each group is also likely to exhibit maximum cohesion.

- *Reliance:* When confronted with an external threat, civilians are more likely to depend on objective control mechanisms, placing their trust in the military's exceptional combat capabilities.

- *Harmony:* In the presence of such a threat arrangement, civil-military relations tend to be harmonious.

Figure 2. Desch's Civil-Military Alignment

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┌─────────────────────────────┐
│  Convergence of Interests    │
│     During High Threat       │
└─────────────────────────────┘
               │
               ▼
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│  Civilian Reliance on        │
│     Military Expertise       │
└─────────────────────────────┘
               │
               ▼
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│  Harmonious Civil-Military   │
│         Relations            │
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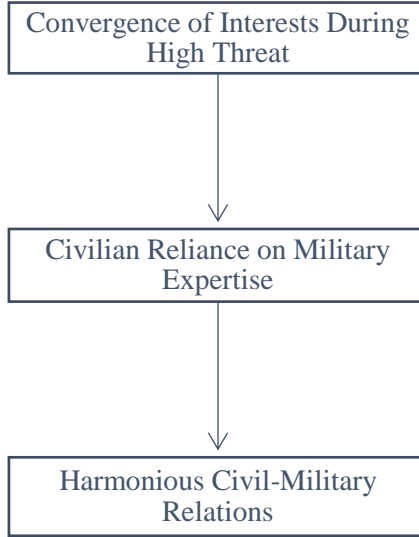
Source: Author

Pakistan took a diverse strategy for combating terrorism from 2012 to 2017, adopting several techniques to handle its complex security challenges (Sanaullah et al., 2021). A significant component of this strategy was the escalation of military operations directed at terrorist organizations active in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) region and the FATA (Vrooman, 2005b). Several operations, including Zarb-e-Azb in 2014 (Afzal, 2021) and Radd-ul-Fasaad in 2017 ("Pakistan Army Launches", 2017). were carried out to disrupt militant networks and drastically reduce their capacity for effective operation.

In addition, the military strengthened its channels for sharing intelligence with non-traditional security structures (Sultan et al., 2024), including *Jirga* and *lashkars*, which helped in targeting the regions of tribal areas of Pakistan Legislative actions, such as the establishment of the National Action Plan (NAP) in 2014 (Ahmed, 2016), offered a comprehensive framework for combatting terrorism. This framework included efforts to curb radicalization and provide law enforcement agencies with additional resources. As an additional measure, Pakistan prioritized the improvement of border control along its porous border with Afghanistan.

This included the construction of border checkpoints and the installation of fences along the border to monitor illicit crossings and prevent terrorists from entering the country. The government of Pakistan has undertaken programs to prevent vulnerable populations from becoming radicalized and promoting moderate narratives as a means of combating radicalization.

In Pakistan, whenever there was a direct threat to the civilian population, this structure was followed throughout counterinsurgency operations. As a result, the civilian population was utterly dependent on the military. The military then used traditional structures to accomplish a common objective: eliminating insurgency movements from their territory and revitalizing societal peace.

Literature Review

There is an increasing recognition of traditional conflict resolution methods in the terror-stricken Pashtun tribal areas of Pakistan, previously known as the FATA (Yousaf & FurrukhZad, 2020). These peripheral regions, situated far from the governing center, have been particularly impacted by the rise of militancy in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region since 2001. The authors further explore the Pashtun cultural code of Pashtunwali, which encompasses the *Jirga* (Pashtun tribal council) and the *Lashkar* (tribal militia), and suggest that the evolving socio-political landscape and the emergence of the secular Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) pose a challenge to traditional structures and the patriarchal values of the Pashtun people, including tribal institutions such as *Jirgas*.

Yousaf (2020) analyzes the influence of Pakistan's postcolonial state structures and colonial legacies on the security and cultural dynamics of the Pashtun tribal areas, formerly known as FATA. He highlights the critical role of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, particularly the *Jirga,* while emphasizing the enduring impact of the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR), a colonial-era legal framework. Yousaf contends that the military's dominance in shaping security policy and the continued reliance on colonial governance structures has negatively impacted the region's security landscape.

Yousaf further highlights the Pashtun community's independent initiatives to combat the escalation of militancy, emphasizing the need for constitutional reforms and the merger of FATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. He advocates integrating indigenous peacekeeping mechanisms like the *Jirga* to foster sustainable peace in South Asia. The work is a valuable resource for scholars of South Asian Studies, International Relations, Peace and Conflict Studies, terrorism, traditional justice, and restorative peace mechanisms, focusing mainly on northwestern Pakistan.

Furthermore, Khan and colleagues (2023) employ an experimental methodology to assess the effectiveness of counter-narratives in reducing the likelihood of violent radicalization. Using a randomized controlled study involving 150 participants, the authors evaluate the impact of various narrative constructs, such as counter-narratives, control stories, and explanations for terrorist attacks, on individuals' cognitive reflection and susceptibility to extremism. The findings indicate that enabling individuals to construct their counter-narratives is more effective than imposing generic substitutes.

Studies further suggest that the function of *Lashkar*, an ancient traditional *Pakhtun* structure, fosters harmony within Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's conflict-affected communities. Information was gathered from 278 houses in four Dir-Upper and Dir-Lower Districts (Iqbal & Alam, 2020). A chi-square test was applied to determine the relationship between *Lashkar* and peace conditions. There was a significant correlation between the presence of *Lashkar* and regional peace, as evidenced by its functions of militant expulsion, authority maintenance, and local safety assurance. Nevertheless, no discernible correlation was found between government armaments and peace, nor *Lashkar's* status as a symbol of peace. According to the study, *Lashkar* protects communities from external aggression (Ahmad et al., 2020).

There are still several gaps in the literature, even though it offers valuable insights about Pashtunwali's traditional dispute resolution methods, the function of *Lashkars*, and the Pakistani state's changing counterinsurgency tactics. First, the cooperative relationships between the state's military machinery and traditional organizations like

Jirgas and *Lashkars* have received little scholarly attention. This makes comprehending how indigenous processes fit into contemporary counterinsurgency frameworks more challenging. Second, there is a lack of theoretical applications that could shed light on how these relationships are changing in response to current security threats because a large portion of the currently available research concentrates on historical and descriptive assessments. Finally, little is known about how socio-political organizations like the PTM influence the transformation of these established institutions.

By using David Galula and Michael C. Desch's theoretical frameworks to critically examine the relationship between conventional structures and state-led counterinsurgency tactics, this study aims to fill these gaps. By emphasizing this relationship, the study advances knowledge of hybrid counterinsurgency strategies and their potential for long-term peace in conflict-prone areas. This work also bridges the gap between theory and practice in counterinsurgency literature by promoting incorporating indigenous practices in contemporary security policy, which places it within the more extensive academic debate.

Civil-Military Strategy: Leveraging Traditional Structures to Counter Violent Extremism

During counterinsurgency operations beginning in 2012, the Pakistani army utilized traditional or informal institutions to foster peace in regions where extremist ideologies were prevalent. These structures were predominantly employed in the Pashtun belt of Pakistan, specifically in the FATA and Swat (Khan et al., 2019). In Pakistan, these traditional structures can be categorized into three primary groupings, as outlined below:

Jirga

In the tribal regions of Pakistan, the *Jirga* functions as a form of local court. The political agent, often called the *Sardar*, maintains law and order in these areas. The *Jirga* plays a crucial role in resolving internal disputes, fostering unity, and promoting collaboration within the community. It has been instrumental in formulating policies for FATA, mobilizing action, and facilitating restoration and rehabilitation efforts in the region (Spee et al., 2021). According to the principles of Pashtunwali, decisions within the *Jirga* are typically made through consensus. These tribal cultures predate the establishment of modern written or codified laws (Joh, 2000).

The *Jirga* system is primarily used to resolve disputes among the Pashtun people. However, it is also practiced, albeit to a lesser extent, among neighboring populations in Afghanistan and Pakistan that are influenced by Pashtun culture. Its primary aim is to prevent tribal warfare and maintain peace (Spee et al., 2021). Although younger individuals may attend *Jirga* meetings, only the more experienced community members hold the authority to resolve disputes or make decisions on critical matters.

Regarding local customs, decisions made within an equitable and accessible *Jirga* are generally reached by consensus. This system can potentially extend the state's authority within specific tribes. The military has leveraged the *Jirga's* role, which has proven highly effective in countering violent actions. The roles of the *Jirga* are interconnected with various military objectives, as outlined below:

i.   **Local Support and Acceptability:** The *Jirga* has authority comparable to that of a court in tribal regions, and its leaders, including the Sardars, enjoy the direct support and approval of the tribal people. Given their significant influence over their communities, the military has enlisted the assistance of these tribal leaders to sustain informal structures (Ali, 2018). Through their support, tribal leaders can prevent their people from succumbing to the extremist ideologies propagated by violent organizations.

ii. **Containing Organizational Recruitment:** Recruitment of new members is a key factor in sustaining the strength of violent groups. The success of these recruitment efforts is contingent on local support and acceptability, which the military has gained through the *Jirga's* involvement. By ensuring that the local population opposes violent ideologies, the military effectively curtails the recruitment efforts of insurgent groups (Akram & Tariq, 2024). This approach significantly disrupts the insurgents' ability to expand their influence.

iii. **Population Containment:** The *Jirga's* influence over tribal communities has helped the military reduce the territories controlled by violent organizations (Irfan et al., 2022). The *Jirga's* authority has also contributed to the confinement of the local population within specific areas, making the activities of violent groups more visible. Being aware of the situation, the local population is better positioned to identify and report areas where extremism is taking root.

iv. **Propagating a Counter-Narrative:** Extremist groups often develop a distinct ideology or narrative to justify their actions (Nawaz, 2011). In response, the military, with the support of the *Jirga*, propagates a counter-narrative that challenges the extremist ideology. The *Jirga*, through its influence, communicates to the local population that these groups are advancing extremist causes, which pose a direct threat to both the community and the state. This narrative is critical in counteracting the ideological influence of violent organizations

v.   **Intelligence Gathering:** Being intimately familiar with the dynamics within their communities, the local population plays a vital role in identifying individuals and locations involved in violent activities. This local knowledge facilitates the gathering of intelligence, which is crucial for the military in preemptively thwarting planned attacks and insurgent operations. The *Jirga's* connection with the community aids in the timely dissemination of information regarding potential threats (Khokhar et al., 2014).

vi. **Logistical Support:** The military has disrupted the logistical networks that sustain insurgent groups with the assistance of traditional structures such as the *Jirga* (Otero-Bahamon et al., 2022). Violent organizations rely on a steady supply of resources, including food, weapons, and other essential materials. With the cooperation of local communities, the military can trace and block these supply lines, effectively hindering the insurgents' operational capabilities.

Demoralization of Extremist Groups

The aforementioned steps are interconnected and collectively contribute to the demoralization of extremist groups. The disruption of their recruitment efforts, logistical support, and ideological narrative, combined with the strategic containment of their activities, significantly weakens their organizational structure. This demoralization is a critical factor in diminishing the influence of violent groups and preventing their expansion.

By utilizing these traditional institutions, the military has strengthened its counterinsurgency efforts and created a more resilient and peaceful environment in regions affected by extremism.

Lashkar

The term *Lashkar* refers to a group of militiamen employed by *Jirgas* to protect their tribes. These militias are responsible for safeguarding the inhabitants of their tribal communities and operate under the laws and regulations established by the *Jirga* leaders. The term *Lashkar* is derived from Persian, meaning 'army' in English. These informal militias are trained in various combat techniques to defend their people, their tribes, and, in some cases, the state (Yousaf, 2020). During periods of conflict, particularly when the state faces well-established threats within tribal regions, the military utilizes the *Lashkar* to support its objectives. Its role becomes particularly significant when employing traditional structures to combat insurgency and achieve strategic goals.

Originally established to protect local communities, the *Lashkar* serves in an essential capacity. For example, before the direct intervention of the Pakistani army in FATA, local communities sought protection from the Taliban. In response, individuals were recruited into the *Lashkar* to ensure the safety of their people from Taliban influence (Yousaf, 2020). This arrangement can be seen as a barter system, with the protection of families in exchange for service in the *Lashkar*. The military has employed the *Lashkar* in the following capacities:

i. ***Awareness of Local Territory:*** A critical advantage of the *Lashkar* is their intimate knowledge of local terrain. During operations like Zarb-e-Azab, *Lashkar* militiamen assisted the Pakistani army by identifying the locations of extremist groups. A similar dynamic was observed during the Vietnam War, where local fighters utilized their knowledge of the land to outmaneuver foreign forces. In Afghanistan, the Taliban's superior understanding of the territory enabled them to gain the upper hand over foreign forces (Akhtar & Ahmed, 2023). Thus, the military's collaboration with the *Lashkar* was instrumental in identifying the locations and movements of violent extremist organizations.

ii. ***Easy Identification:*** Skilled in combat techniques, *Lashkar* members could infiltrate militant groups and act as spies. Their primary role was to inform the state or their *Jirgas* about insurgent activities and policies (Perlez & Shah, 2008). This capability proved particularly beneficial during the Zarb-e-Azab operation, where *Lashkar* militiamen provided crucial intelligence on insurgent movements.

iii. ***Local Protection and Support:*** The primary function of the *Lashkar* is to protect their communities. By leveraging their combat skills, they help safeguard their tribes, thus alleviating some of the burden on the state and military forces. In this regard, the *Lashkar* is collaborative in ensuring peace and stability. Their knowledge of defense tactics allows them to protect state institutions, making them valuable allies in counterinsurgency efforts.

Clergy

As traditional religious authorities, the clergy play a pivotal role in their communities. Their functions vary across religious traditions but generally involve overseeing rituals, teaching religious doctrines, and guiding followers in matters of faith. In the context of

counterinsurgency, the clergy can be instrumental in challenging the extremist ideologies propagated by militant groups, particularly when these groups misuse religious teachings to justify violence.

The Pakistani military has engaged the clergy to combat the false narratives of extremist beliefs advanced by religiously motivated insurgent groups. Clerics, due to their social acceptability and religious authority, are uniquely positioned to issue fatwas, especially when extremist organizations promote a distorted version of jihad. These fatwas help prevent the spread of misleading ideologies and counteract extremist propaganda. A notable example occurred in 2012 following the Taliban's attack on Malala Yousafzai. In response, the 'Sunni Ittehad Council,' consisting of fifty Muslim scholars, issued a *Fatwa* denouncing the Taliban's actions and labeling their interpretation of jihad as misguided. This fatwa emphasized that ignorance was the driving force behind the Taliban's distorted worldview (Boone, 2012).

By leveraging the influence of traditional institutions like the *Lashkar* and the clergy, the Pakistani military has been able to challenge extremist ideologies, enhance local security, and foster peace in regions affected by insurgency.

Figure 3. Interplay Between Traditional Structures, Military, and Governance in Counterinsurgency
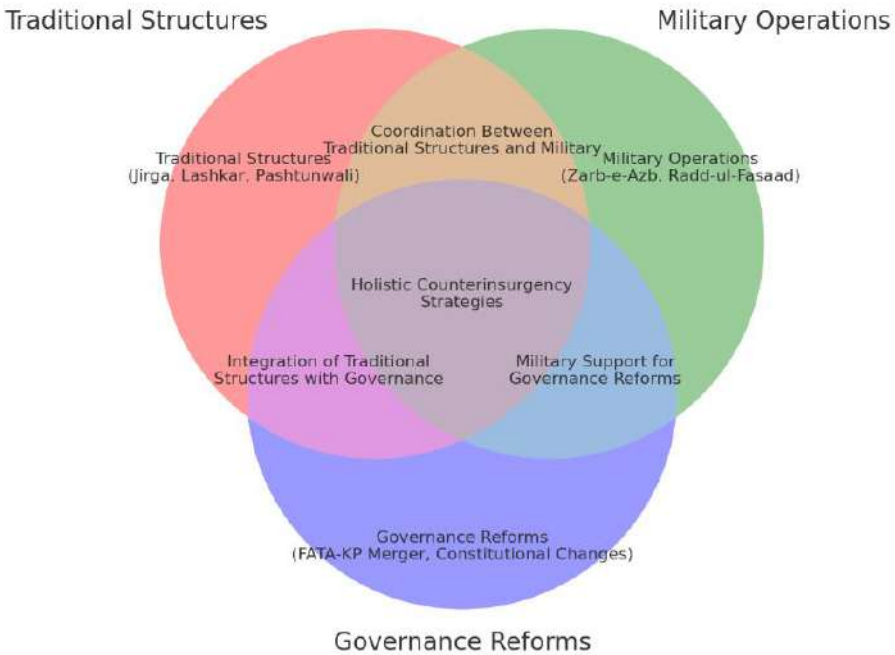
Source: Author

Limitations: Military Use of Traditional Structures in Counterinsurgency
The military's approach to including traditional structures in the Counterinsurgency operation is beneficial and effective (Hensen,2024). The organization consistently achieves success in delivering intelligence regarding vulnerabilities in the insurgents'

strategies, which the military effectively employs to counteract these violent factions. The state has also witnessed severe repercussions of traditional structures, which may be regarded as constraints of involvement of these informal institutions, that occurred as soon as the operation was effective and ended. Early on, after the conclusion of counterinsurgency operations, the following are some of the limitations that were observed in the tribal areas:

Tribal Hostilities
During and after the operational phase of conflicts, tribal leaders can utilize their authority against one another in their tribal enmities (Searcy, 2023). This occurs when tribal leaders misuse their power against their opposing tribe, which results in more turmoil in the tribal lands.

Personal Inclination
This limitation can be understood with patron-client relations. The state gives power to local leaders, and they use this power as patronage to achieve their interests by supporting their community and family. Moreover, in the name of tribal leadership, they gather much money for their interests, promoting more poverty in their tribal areas, and no one can challenge their orders.

Political Inclination
In addition to soliciting most of their funds from the people, tribal leaders gain support by serving the community's best interests. They can exert influence over their political authorities through their economic might. After gaining enough power, informal structures can threaten the writ of the state by demanding a state within a state since they have enough authority provided by the state to do so.

Clerical Manipulations
Through manipulation of leadership choices and, in certain instances, the expression of orthodox ideas on a societal problem, clerics can influence such decisions. An illustration of this may be seen in the case of Sufi scholar Muhammad from Swat (Ali, 2013) when the state utilized him to initiate negotiations with the Taliban on behalf of the government. However, upon his return from the meeting, he contested the state's writ by asserting that the Taliban was proceeding in the correct direction by advocating for Shariah law. This ideology is intrinsically linked to religious doctrines.

Deviation of Lashkar and Easy Arms Accessibility
If not utilized effectively post-conflict or post-operation, *Lashkar* could potentially transform into a violent group. When it came to the mujaheddin, their initial objective was to combat the Soviets; however, they subsequently emerged as a menace to the State. Additionally, the simple availability of arms to the *Lashkar* and tribesmen may pose a threat, given that the state provides them with firearms for protection, which they may later employ in acts of ethnic violence.

Conclusion
Incorporating traditional entities like *Lashkars*, *Jirgas*, and religious authorities into counterinsurgency strategies illustrates the importance of utilizing these methods to

tackle intricate insurgencies in conflict zones. These systems, firmly entrenched in the cultural and historical contexts of Dir, FATA, and Swat, are crucial in promoting local acceptance, collecting intelligence, restricting recruitment possibilities for insurgents, and disseminating counter-narratives. Their capacity to connect local populations with state institutions highlights their significance in counterinsurgency operations, where legitimacy and trust are essential for success. As traditional justice systems, *Jirgas* facilitate conflict resolution, restore order, and foster peace within local communities. Their incorporation into counterinsurgency plans guarantees that operations are executed with the approval of residents, reducing resistance and improving collaboration. *Lashkars*, as informal militias, provide localized security and assist in intelligence collection while undermining insurgent groups. Religious authorities, such as clerics, engage by confronting extremist ideology, issuing fatwas against militant organizations, and advocating for narratives of moderation. These traditional structures collectively improve the operational efficiency of counterinsurgency techniques and offer a culturally sensitive response to insurgencies.

Nonetheless, the employment of conventional frameworks is fraught with difficulties. Tribal conflicts, personal and political influences, clerical manipulation, and potential deviation within *Lashkars* provide considerable weaknesses. These characteristics may undermine the efficacy of conventional methods, potentially converting them into sources of instability rather than tools of peace. The potential for *Lashkars* or tribesmen to transform into violent factions directly threatens national security and compromises counterinsurgency initiatives. The improper use of religious authority or political involvement can undermine the goals of these traditional systems, resulting in fragmentation and diminished public trust. To address these limitations, a comprehensive strategy is necessary to manage risks and optimize the potential of traditional institutions. This involves promoting openness, improving accountability, and assuring the integration of conventional procedures within a comprehensive framework of state-led governance. Establishing safeguards prevents misuse of these systems while ensuring their conformity with national security objectives.

The findings of this study underscore the imperative for a hybrid counterinsurgency strategy that integrates contemporary military capabilities with culturally grounded approaches. This method recognizes the socio-political dynamics of conflict-affected areas and utilizes the advantages of both traditional and formal institutions. These practices improve the operational efficacy of counterinsurgency initiatives and promote enduring stability by tackling the fundamental causes of insurgencies. The partnership between the military and conventional institutions guarantees that local communities see representation and security, thereby diminishing the allure of insurgent ideology. A culturally attuned and flexible counterinsurgency plan is crucial for tackling the intricacies of contemporary insurgencies. When employed successfully, traditional structures are potent instruments for connecting local communities with governmental institutions. Integrating these methods with effective state-led policies enables the mitigation of violent extremism, safeguarding of at-risk populations, and establishment of sustainable peace in areas afflicted by insurgency.

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Analyzing Psychological Operations: A Case Study of Indo-Pak Hostility (2010-2024)

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Abstract

Psychological manipulation refers to the strategic effort to influence and alter the attitudes and behaviors of a target audience. This study examines India's use of Psychological Operations (PSYOP) and information warfare since 1947, highlighting how these tactics have jeopardized Pakistan's sovereignty, national security, and international reputation. Framed through the lens of neo-imperialism, the research evaluates India's intelligence and cyberspace operations, which have employed persuasive techniques to influence Pakistan's decision-making, including its nuclear program, during critical incidents. The study identifies diverse methods used by Indian nationalist movements and propaganda campaigns to manipulate international perceptions of Pakistan. These include media and publications, support for separatist movements, counter-propaganda initiatives, and deception operations—all aimed at undermining Pakistan's global image and influencing the international community. The findings emphasize that exploiting an adversary's vulnerabilities is central to the success of PSYOP campaigns. The results have significant implications for understanding PSYOP mechanisms and provide a foundation for assessing current and future PSYOP capabilities in South Asia. Overall, this research offers valuable insights into the efficacy of PSYOP in influencing audiences and contributes to the broader understanding of persuasion theory in the context of modern information warfare and national security.

Introduction

The systematic use of communication, propaganda, and other psychological techniques to influence the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of target audiences is referred to

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as psychological warfare (PSYOP) or psychological operations. The primary objective of psychological operations is to alter the psychological state of individuals or groups to achieve specific outcomes. Governments, military organizations, intelligence agencies, or non-state actors may utilize these operations. PSYOP can be conducted during peacetime, amid conflict, or post-conflict scenarios and may target domestic or international audiences.

PSYOP has become increasingly critical for nation-states in the information age, mainly where socio-psychological risks are more pronounced. Psychological warfare is as significant as its physical dimension in modern conflicts. It is especially vital in countering terrorism, as terrorists themselves engage in psychological warfare, using violence as a tool to instill fear and exert psychological pressure rather than solely causing physical harm. The success of psychological operations often outweighs the tactical execution of military operations. As the renowned strategist Sun Tzu remarked, 'If you know your enemy and yourself, you will never be at risk in a hundred battles.' Understanding both the strengths and weaknesses of adversaries is essential to effective engagement.

Information Warfare (IW), a key component of modern PSYOP, focuses on undermining the enemy's information systems to create fear, suspicion, and confusion. Through misinformation, propaganda, and fake news, IW can elicit significant and often unexpected behavioral responses from adversaries. The primary targets of IW are the foundational elements of a state, such as ideology, public opinion, and national security structures.

Historical Context: PSYOP between Pakistan and India
Since their independence, Pakistan and India have employed various psychological techniques, particularly in the context of the Kashmir conflict. During the 1948 war, both states used media to advance their respective claims over Kashmir, portraying the other as the aggressor. Similarly, during the skirmishes over the Rann of Kutch in 1965, both countries utilized media to boost national morale through patriotic songs and news while seeking to demoralize their opponent.

The liberation of East Pakistan in 1971 (leading to the creation of Bangladesh) also involved significant psychological warfare tactics. India effectively highlighted Pakistan's military actions as human rights violations on international platforms, shaping global opinion against Pakistan. In the same vein, the Kargil War in 1999 and the Mumbai attacks in 2008 provided opportunities for both nations to leverage media as a tool of psychological warfare. During the Kargil conflict, India spread the narrative that Pakistan had infiltrated the region, while during the Mumbai attacks, India accused Pakistan of state-sponsored terrorism. These strategies aimed to secure diplomatic support and influence global opinion in favor of India.

This research study assesses the psychological operations between India and Pakistan from 2010 to 2023 and how they have impacted the relationship between the two states. The asymmetrical relationship between India and Pakistan has made the region more politically unstable. This is because both states have often engaged in conflicts and returned from the brink of full-scale war. Both states have been using conventional and non-conventional warfare against each other. A major concern is now the psychological operations taking place between India and Pakistan, as this shows how technological advancement has impacted both military and civilian life in both states. As propaganda is used as a medium of communication in psychological warfare, the target audience, which is mainly civilians, is getting most of the influence. Indeed,

as both states possess nuclear weapons, the possibility of direct, devastating conflict has been eliminated in favor of psychological warfare. However, threats of war due to the instability of deterrence still exist. This type of warfare has increased uncertainty about the future of South Asia, as maintaining peace in the region can become very difficult.

The concept of Neo-imperialism combines state-level and systemic-level influences to analyze the use of IW through media and propaganda. Pakistan is frequently portrayed as a 'terrorist-harboring,' 'problematic,' and 'erratic' country by international media, foreign think tanks, global academia, and even government representatives. This negative portrayal is primarily attributed to persistent lobbying and support from adversaries, particularly India, against Pakistan. Both national and international media have perpetuated this narrative, with the majority of significant news reports and analytical commentary about Pakistan being hostile and antagonistic.

The principle that 'truth is the best PSYOP' has been effectively exploited by India in its psychological operations against Pakistan. Over the years, India's deliberate use of PSYOP has succeeded in altering global and regional perceptions of Pakistan, thereby diminishing its psychological resilience. India has skillfully integrated psychological warfare with conventional and non-conventional military tactics. Notable examples include statements by Indian officials regarding their nuclear program, allegations portraying Pakistan as a terrorist and problematic state, efforts to sow mistrust between Pakistan's civilian population and its military, the encouragement of separatist movements, the fostering of anti-Pakistan sentiment, and the leveraging of deception in Afghanistan to depict Pakistan as a perpetrator of conflict.

These principles form the foundation of all psychological operations. As highlighted in the *Applied Joint Doctrine for Psychological Operations* (NATO, 2007), effective PSYOP can erode an opponent's psychological resistance by positively altering their mindset. This principle underscores the enduring advantages of PSYOP as a strategic tool: By targeting the opponent's psychological state, resistance can be reduced, ultimately diminishing their capacity for sustained opposition.

When employed with political or military operations, PSYOP acts as a force multiplier, amplifying their overall impact on the target audience. In the case of Pakistan, India's strategic deployment of psychological operations alongside conventional warfare has demonstrated the effectiveness of this approach, shaping perceptions and influencing global narratives to its advantage.

Significance of the Study

This research is significant as it examines the psychological impacts of psychological warfare between India and Pakistan on national identity, civilian perceptions, and the broader dimensions of conflict between the two nations. It contributes to the existing literature by analyzing the role of media narratives and misinformation and disinformation strategies on social media in fostering collective insecurity, influencing emotions, and shaping generational perceptions of the India-Pakistan conflict.

The study focuses on the period from 2010 to 2024, highlighting the volatility of psychological warfare in the context of modern technological and digital advancements, which have profoundly influenced nearly all aspects of the conflict between the two countries. In conclusion, the research explores the responses of both states to historical animosities, mainly through efforts to shape public perceptions, understanding, and attitudes toward the ongoing conflict.

Methodology

This study adopts an exploratory research approach, focusing on the impacts of psychological warfare tactics on the perceptions, attitudes, and responses of India and Pakistan toward their historical hostility. It examines the domino effect of misinformation and disinformation campaigns on both countries' political and social landscapes within their historical political dynamics. Secondary research methods were employed, utilizing sources such as books, journals, articles, and newspapers to fulfill the objectives of this study.

Historical Development of Psychological Operations

Early Psychological Operations

PSYOPs are as old as warfare itself despite being perceived as a contemporary innovation. In ancient times, empires employed techniques designed to instill fear and gain a psychological advantage over their adversaries. For example, Roman soldiers used shock and awe tactics, repeatedly striking their swords against their shields to intimidate enemies. During the Battle of Pelusium in 525 BC, Persian soldiers exploited the Egyptians' religious reverence for cats by holding them hostage, forcing them to surrender to avoid harming the sacred animals.

In the 13th century, Genghis Khan, the Mongol emperor, devised multiple PSYOP strategies to terrify opponents. He ordered each soldier to carry three lit torches at night to create the illusion of a much larger army. He also developed whistle-producing arrows with grooves to unsettle enemies and gathered severed heads to display on the walls of conquered villages as an extreme form of shock and terror.

During the American Revolutionary War, British soldiers attempted to intimidate George Washington's Continental Army by wearing bright red uniforms, signifying dominance and power. However, the conspicuous uniforms became a liability, making British soldiers easy targets for American snipers, ultimately turning the tactic into a strategic mistake (Robert, 2019).

Modern Psychological Operations

The use of modern PSYOP strategies began during World War I, enabled by advancements in technology and mass media. Governments leveraged mass-circulation newspapers to disseminate propaganda, while aerial advancements enabled the dropping of pamphlets behind enemy lines. Non-lethal propaganda shells were also developed. For example, British pilots dropped postcards written by German prisoners of war, praising the humane treatment they received to demoralize German troops.

World War II marked the peak of PSYOP usage, which was extensively employed by both the Axis and Allied powers. Adolf Hitler's propaganda campaigns, which helped him rise to power, focused on delegitimizing political rivals and fueling national pride while blaming Germany's economic struggles on external groups. Japan used psychological broadcasts through 'Tokyo Rose,' a radio program combining music with misinformation about Japanese victories to demoralize Allied forces. Germany employed a similar approach with 'Axis Sally.'

A notable PSYOP success during World War II was the Allied deception strategy leading up to D-Day. By leaking false orders, American commanders convinced the German high command that the invasion would occur at Calais rather than Normandy, significantly aiding the success of the actual operation.

During the Cold War, psychological operations played a critical role. U.S. President Ronald Reagan announced the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), commonly

known as 'Star Wars,' which aimed to intercept Soviet nuclear missiles before they re-entered the atmosphere. Whether feasible or not, the perceived threat of the SDI forced Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to revive détente-era negotiations, leading to progress in nuclear arms control.

In the post-9/11 era, the United States launched a major 'shock and awe' campaign in Iraq to weaken the Iraqi military's resolve and undermine support for Saddam Hussein. Beginning with two days of continuous bombing on March 19, 2003, the U.S.-led coalition quickly took control of Baghdad by April 5, facing minimal resistance. Within a month, the campaign concluded with the U.S. declaring victory on April 14.

Contemporary Psychological Operations

In the ongoing War on Terror, psychological operations have evolved with technological advancements. The Islamist terrorist organization ISIS has used social media and internet tools extensively to recruit sympathizers and combatants worldwide, demonstrating the role of digital platforms in modern psychological warfare (Robert, 2019).

Theoretical Framework

Neo-imperialism is a theory that emerged in the late 20th century to describe a modern form of imperialism distinct from classical colonialism. It posits that certain powerful nations, particularly Western countries and multinational corporations, exert dominance and control over less developed or weaker nations through economic, political, and cultural means rather than direct territorial exploitation. According to the theory, direct military invasions are no longer necessary to influence and control other nations. Instead, tools such as literature, culture, and economic mechanisms can shape the perceptions and ideas of *target* populations.

It is important to note that the theory of neo-imperialism is not universally accepted among scholars, and there are varying perspectives on the nature and extent of contemporary imperialism. Critics argue that neo-imperialism oversimplifies complex global dynamics and often overlooks weaker nations' agency and autonomy in shaping their destinies. Unlike traditional forms of imperialism, which relied on direct territorial control, neo-imperialism seeks to maintain dominance indirectly, leveraging economic, political, and cultural mechanisms (International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, 2023).

Key Features of Neo-imperialism

Neo-imperialism emphasizes economic control and exploitation as primary methods of maintaining influence over other countries. This control is often exercised through trade agreements, foreign investment, debt dependency, and resource extraction. Powerful nations and multinational corporations exploit the economic vulnerabilities of weaker nations, perpetuating an unequal distribution of wealth and resources. The theory highlights how economic dominance serves as a tool for maintaining global hierarchies.

In addition to economic exploitation, neo-imperialism involves exerting political influence by powerful nations over weaker ones. This influence often manifests through political interventions, support for authoritarian regimes aligned with the interests of dominant powers, and the manipulation of international institutions to advance their agendas. Neo-imperialism can also take the form of neocolonial practices, wherein powerful nations retain significant control over the political structures and decision-making processes of less powerful states.

The concept further extends beyond economic and political control to include the spread of cultural influence. Dominant nations frequently export their cultural products, including media, entertainment, and consumer goods, which shape the beliefs, preferences, and lifestyles of populations in other countries. This cultural hegemony often leads to the erosion of local cultures and contributes to the homogenization of global culture (Zalava, 2022).

According to neo-imperialism theory, inequality and dependency inherently characterize the relationship between dominant and weaker nations. Weaker nations often rely on dominant powers for investment, technology, and market access, resulting in a loss of economic sovereignty and limited policy autonomy. This dependency perpetuates underdevelopment and prevents weaker nations from achieving sustainable growth (Ansari, 2022).

Neo-imperialism also highlights the persistence of existing global power structures and the concentration of power in the hands of a few dominant nations and corporations. These structures reinforce the dominance of select nations while creating significant barriers to the economic and political development of weaker states.

Case Study

The origins of propaganda warfare between India and Pakistan can be traced back to their independence in 1947. Since then, both states have been psychologically preoccupied with each other, engaging in various conflicts to achieve their national interests. This dynamic aligns with the framework of neo-imperialism, which suggests that dominance can be maintained not through direct territorial exploitation but through control of media, publications, and literature to influence perceptions and perspectives.

Key issues such as the Kashmir dispute, water conflicts, territorial disagreements, and the nuclear arms race have long provided a foundation for competition between India and Pakistan in South Asia. This rivalry underscores their efforts to assert dominance and power in the region. Psychological warfare has become an entrenched reality in South Asia, fueled by the increasing use of cyberspace, artificial intelligence, psychological operations, propaganda, and disinformation campaigns.

Controlling the narrative has emerged as a strategic tool within neo-imperialism. By shaping media narratives and influencing publications, states can mold public opinions and national perspectives in their favor. India has allegedly interfered with Pakistan on numerous occasions, capitalizing on moments of instability to create further disruption and chaos (Dummett, 2011).

Pakistan: Historical Challenges

Kashmir Issue

The Kashmir issue has been intertwined with elements of propaganda and disinformation since the time of independence. Maharaja Hari Singh, the ruler of Jammu and Kashmir, acted as a decoy, aligning with Indian authorities and spreading misinformation about the region's fate. Despite having a Muslim-majority population of over 70%, Maharaja Hari Singh sought independence for his princely state, disregarding the preferences of the majority. Pakistan immediately contested this decision, while India deliberately delayed its response. Following the announcement of the draft agreement, a massive genocide against Muslims occurred in Jammu and Kashmir. British Viceroy Lord Mountbatten denied this violence.

With the assistance of Sikh and Hindu migrants from Pakistan and members of the hardline Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Maharaja Hari Singh systematically orchestrated the massacre of thousands of Muslims in the Jammu region as they fled to Pakistan (Malik & Akhtar, 2021).

Separation of East Pakistan

Another example of India's use of information warfare against Pakistan is seen during the separation of East Pakistan. In April 1971, Awami League leaders in exile were housed at a residence on Theatre Road in Calcutta, India, where Indira Gandhi established the first government of Bangladesh in exile. According to Zaki, Infantry, and Army (2011), a former Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) official, the Mukti Bahini organization was fully operational by 1971 and trained extensively in guerrilla tactics, sabotage, and armed resistance. Mukti Bahini's objectives included disrupting communication routes, destroying power plants, halting exports, and depleting the Pakistan Army's resources before direct intervention by the Indian Army.

Indian citizens, particularly Bengalis, funded and supported the Mukti Bahini, while media outlets played a crucial role in conducting psychological operations. These operations aimed to portray Pakistan negatively on a global scale, creating a humanitarian narrative that isolated Pakistan internationally (Rashid, 2022).

Additionally, journalists like Anthony Mascarenhas and Abdul Bari were instrumental in shaping international opinion. Mascarenhas, a foreign writer, documented the humanitarian crisis in East Pakistan, while Bari, a Pakistani journalist, heavily criticized Pakistan's actions in his writings. Their work significantly influenced global public opinion, rallying international support for Bangladesh's independence.

Nuclear Arms Race Between India and Pakistan

The foundation of India's nuclear weapons program was rooted in its defeat during the 1962 Indo-China War and China's acquisition of nuclear weapons in 1964. Following India's 'Peaceful Nuclear Explosion' in 1974, authorization was granted for the construction of nuclear weapons. Over two decades, India developed its nuclear weapons infrastructure, delivery systems, and a sizeable military force, culminating in the establishment of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) and the construction of its largest nuclear power plant at the time.

In 1998, both India and Pakistan conducted their first nuclear tests, triggering a nuclear arms race that severely threatened the region's strategic stability. This escalation underscores how India's nuclear ambitions have influenced Pakistan's strategic decisions, compelling it to respond and attempt to maintain regional equilibrium (Waseem & Sajjad, 2022).

Contemporary Strategic and Security Challenges for Pakistan

Balochistan Issue

Balochistan represents one of the most critical internal challenges for Pakistan. The primary issue stems from the perception among locals that the region's natural resources are not benefiting its inhabitants. While this political and economic issue is inherently resolvable, India has exacerbated the situation by deliberately creating regional conflict. Utilizing Afghan soil, India has allegedly supported terrorist activities and fueled separatist movements in Baluchistan. Pakistan has repeatedly presented evidence of India's involvement, particularly after the capture of Kulbhushan Yadav, a RAW agent, in 2016, who remains in Pakistan's custody. India's alleged actions to

destabilize the region include instigating Baloch dissidents residing abroad and leveraging them to initiate separation movements. By destabilizing Baluchistan, India aims to inflict economic and political damage on Pakistan, leveraging psychological warfare to exploit internal vulnerabilities and undermine Pakistan's sovereignty and stability (Waseem & Sajjad, 2022).

Uri Attack and Propaganda in the Digital Age
The digital age has transformed the internet into a potent tool for propaganda. The 2016 Uri attack and subsequent claims of 'surgical strikes' by India generated significant propaganda through digital platforms. Hashtags, trending tweets, and bots were employed to shape narratives, influence public attitudes, and provoke retaliatory sentiments. Experts hired by propagandists designed intelligent bots to amplify the BJP government's narrative, enhancing its political standing and bolstering its nationalist rhetoric. Additionally, videos exaggerated the significance of the surgical strikes, showcasing India's supposed military prowess (Saud & Kazim, 2022).

While India may not rank among the world's most advanced cyberwarfare nations (such as the U.S., Russia, or China), its use of social engineering, disinformation, and hacking espionage highlights its ability to manipulate narratives and create regional instability. India employs cyber tactics, including spear phishing and zero-day vulnerabilities, to collect sensitive data and strengthen its strategic posture in South Asia.

Sidewinder and Zero-Day Research
Research conducted by AT&T Alien Labs has revealed the activities of Sidewinder, a highly active group in South and Southeast Asia supporting Indian political interests. The group engages in spear phishing and document exploitation to assert regional dominance. Similarly, Exodus Intelligence, a Texas-based firm, investigated India's use of zero-day vulnerabilities in Windows to conduct surveillance against Pakistan and China. India reportedly modified these vulnerabilities for hostile purposes. Following these findings, India was barred from acquiring further zero-day research from Exodus, which collaborated with Microsoft to address the exploited vulnerabilities (Brewster, 2021).

Exploitation of Muslims During COVID-19
During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a significant rise in hate speech and misinformation targeting Indian Muslims. False narratives depicted Muslims as 'super-spreaders' intent on infecting Hindus, leading to widespread discrimination. This misinformation, fueled by BJP IT cells and Hindutva supporters, was disseminated through WhatsApp, social media platforms, and propaganda-laden content. As a result, Muslims were denied access to residential settlements, hospitals, and other essential services, leading to unnecessary deaths. Additionally, the Indian government imposed a ten-year ban on the entry of 2,550 foreign Tablighi Jamaat supporters, further marginalizing the Muslim community (Banaji & Bhat, 2022).

EU DisinfoLab Revelations
In 2022, Brussels-based EU DisinfoLab exposed a vast network of 265 fake media outlets, NGOs, and think tanks operating in 65 countries to serve Indian interests. This network, known as 'Indian Chronicles,' was dedicated to spreading anti-Pakistan and anti-China narratives globally. It aimed to enhance India's international image at the expense of rivals, leveraging fake identities of journalists, activists, and media

organizations. These entities disseminated misinformation through registered websites and impersonated established outlets such as *The Economist* and *Voice of America*. ANI, an Indian news agency, frequently amplified these fabricated stories, publishing 13 anti-Pakistan and anti-China articles in 2022 alone (Jahangir, 2020).

Impacts of Psychological Warfare on Pakistan

India's psychological warfare tactics have had profound social, political, and economic impacts on Pakistan. Key consequences include:

- *Civil-Military Divide:* India's propaganda campaigns have fostered mistrust between civilians and the military, eroding public confidence in Pakistan's institutions.
- *International Defamation:* Misinformation campaigns have damaged Pakistan's global reputation, portraying the country as unstable and a sponsor of terrorism.
- *Cultural and Economic Unrest:* India has targeted Pakistan's socio-cultural fabric through its media and film industry, portraying Pakistanis as smugglers and terrorists. These narratives undermine Pakistan's cultural identity and foster anti-Pakistani sentiment globally.
- *Support for Separatist Movements:* By aiding groups such as the Baloch Republican Army (BRA) and the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), India has intensified insurgency and violence in Baluchistan, according to evidence linked to Kulbhushan Yadav.
- *Economic Strain:* India's tactics have forced Pakistan to mobilize large numbers of troops along its borders with India and Afghanistan, imposing significant economic costs.
- *Double-Front Conflict***:** Pakistan faces the challenge of maintaining security on both its eastern and western borders. India's non-conventional warfare tactics keep Pakistan engaged in low-intensity conflicts, which, though below the threshold of nuclear escalation, remain costly and destabilizing.
- *Global Misinformation Campaigns:* Mercenaries hired by India have been implicated in discrediting Pakistan internationally, as seen in the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) activities since 2014 (Mughal, 2021).

India's continuous engagement in psychological and non-conventional warfare has placed Pakistan in a precarious position. These tactics not only destabilize Pakistan but also risk escalating into a full-scale conflict, potentially leading to devastating consequences for the entire region (Mirza & Babar, 2021).

Psychological Operations and International Law

Psychological warfare has been a part of armed conflicts throughout history, with different civilizations developing their interpretations of the concept. Western militaries view psychological operations (PSYOP) as tools of influence and communication designed to shape the thoughts, behaviors, and perspectives of adversaries or civilian populations. In contrast, the Chinese military conceptualizes PSYOP as using specific information and media to influence behavior through deterrence, propaganda, and emotional guidance for strategic purposes. Similarly, the Russian military regards psychological warfare as a 'war of minds,' targeting the mental framework of adversaries. Non-state actors also employ psychological operations to achieve their objectives.

As the speed and range of PSYOP increase in the digital age, they pose significant concerns due to their potential impact on humanity. While International Humanitarian Law (IHL) permits the use of psychological operations within the bounds

necessary for military objectives, it explicitly prohibits operations that harm civilians or target military personnel outside the scope of combat (Rodenhäuser, 2023).

Disinformation, Propaganda, and International Legal Frameworks

Disinformation and hate speech have historically been used by states during armed conflicts. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression has repeatedly raised concerns about these practices. IHL addresses psychological operations and information warfare through two primary frameworks:

1. *Lawful Use of Misinformation:* IHL permits the use of specific misinformation as a tactic of war but prohibits propaganda and pressure targeting civilians to achieve voluntary objectives. The distinction between lawful and unlawful propaganda is crucial, as lawful propaganda may promote peace, whereas unlawful propaganda can incite violence.

2. *Impact-Based Rules***:** IHL focuses on the effects of psychological warfare and mandates adherence to five key rules to minimize harm to humanity:
   - Avoid actions compelling individuals to violate IHL prohibitions.
   - Maintain loyalty to lawful tactics of war.
   - Prohibit threats and terror against soldiers and civilians.
   - Prevent inhumane treatment that violates dignity, such as exposing prisoners of war for public curiosity.
   - Protect medical and humanitarian personnel and ensure the free conduct of relief operations (Rodenhäuser, 2023).

Psychological operations are not classified as 'attacks' under IHL, as their non-physical nature does not always result in direct violence. However, Additional Protocol I requires states to limit PSYOP to military objectives and protect civilian populations from harm. Article 48 of the protocol emphasizes the distinction between civilians and combatants, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) clarifies that PSYOP should exclude ideological, political, or religious motives, focusing solely on combat-related objectives (Dunlap, 2000).

Way Forward

To establish robust checks and balances, Pakistan must develop institutions capable of combating cyber warfare and disinformation tactics. While the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) has been in effect since 2016, it requires enhancement and revisions to address contemporary challenges. A comprehensive National Information Operations Policy should also be devised and made public, with collaboration between the Ministry of Information Technology (MoIT), the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), the Pakistan National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA), and relevant defense committees.

This policy must include measures to prevent the domestic use of political propaganda via journalists and social media. To achieve this, new regulations tailored to the digital age should guarantee media independence and promote constructive journalism. Alongside domestic legislation, fostering ethical awareness is crucial to limiting the misuse of social media and the internet. Rather than adopting a fragmented approach, stakeholders—including legislators, armed forces, think tanks, and citizens—should collaborate to project a cohesive nationalist image. Media outlets should adopt better narratives to adhere to regulations, avoid fear-mongering content, and present an accurate portrayal of Pakistan through international frameworks.

Additionally, it is essential to improve analogies between Hindutva ideology and other forms of extremism, such as terrorism and Nazism. Extremist ideologies, whether rooted in religious fundamentalism or political agendas, must be treated equally. To counter Indian propaganda, intelligence agencies and response units must devise strategies to process and manage genuine information effectively while leveraging expert opinions and public sentiment (Saud & Kazim, 2022).

For the Pakistan Army, it is imperative that the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) actively develop themes and perspectives to rebuild its image as a vital pillar of national security. This can be achieved through the effective utilization of electronic and print media. In the era of information warfare, where limiting the spread of news or information is nearly impossible, the focus should shift to minimizing damage rather than attempting to suppress information or resorting to reactive measures.

Addressing Electromagnetic Warfare

The advent of advanced technology, such as E-bombs capable of paralyzing a state's military communication through massive electromagnetic waves, poses a significant threat. Pakistan must prioritize developing and implementing Transient Electromagnetic Pulse Emanations Standards (TEMPEST) to counter such attacks. Additionally, Pakistan needs to centralize its cyber network and bolster its capacity to counter offensive tactics, particularly those emanating from India (Khan, 2012).

Incorporating Cybersecurity in Education

Improvements in education must complement support for technical advancements. Cybersecurity principles should be incorporated into educational curricula to prepare a workforce equipped to combat modern threats. Emphasis should be placed on intangible domains, as non-kinetic warfare cannot be entirely avoided but must be mitigated. Furthermore, policies must discourage propagandists, journalists, and political actors from misusing media for personal or political gain.

Using smart bots could help Pakistan enhance its social media presence and project a more positive image. Training think tanks, media organizations, and other institutions to promote constructive narratives is essential for countering negative portrayals of Pakistan. Social media should also be leveraged to advocate for good governance, foster a positive reputation, and combat corruption. Addressing socioeconomic disparities is equally important to reduce the vulnerability of marginalized communities to manipulation by adversaries. Empowered communities are less likely to succumb to narratives suggesting their rights have been infringed.

Raising Awareness and Promoting Media Literacy

Raising media literacy among educators, businesses, technological institutions, and the media industry is critical. Awareness programs and university conferences should focus on identifying risky websites and advertisements often used by identity thieves and scammers. These efforts should also target cyberbullying and other cybercrimes at their source. Public awareness campaigns must highlight the risks of information security breaches and the dangers of opening suspicious links or websites (Saud & Kazim, 2022).

Analysis

Pakistan and India have a long history of conflict, repeatedly approaching the brink of full-scale war. Each confrontation heightens concerns about the potential failure of deterrence in South Asia, particularly as both nations continue to conduct periodic

missile tests. These actions underscore the dual impact of such advancements on military and civilian spheres, which cannot be overlooked.

Following the development of nuclear weapons programs in both states, the prospect of direct conflict diminished, giving way to psychological warfare (Psywar). Substantial evidence of Psywar tactics employed by both countries, often linked to traditional and modern forms of media, exists. The media, particularly mass media, has become a weapon in this context, enabling the dissemination of targeted content to achieve specific objectives.

Despite avoiding full-scale war, both nations remain in a tense standoff, perpetuating regional instability. This persistent threat of conflict exacerbates uncertainty in South Asia, making establishing peace exceptionally challenging. The disputes between Pakistan and India are deeply rooted in issues of identity and power dynamics, which both administrations have consistently demonstrated.

Historically, the conflict has oscillated between overt warfare on the battlefield and covert hostilities manifested through psychological operations. This ongoing engagement in Psywar further complicates the prospects for peace, highlighting the entrenched animosities and complex dynamics that define the relationship between these two adversarial states.

Conclusion

PSYOPs have transcended their traditional role within conventional military settings, gaining prominence in both war and peace. These operations have garnered support from advocates and neutral communities. Investments in understanding the psychological influence on populations have led to the development of advanced techniques to refine and enhance their application. During the interwar years, manipulation methods became widely recognized, and the advancement of psychological sciences significantly influenced societal norms, organizational processes, and collective thought.

In the modern era**,** Neo-imperialism posits that powerful states wield control over the minds and behaviors of other societies, eliminating the need for direct territorial control. Psychological warfare has become an everyday reality, shaping mental and behavioral patterns not only in the West but globally. The tactics used by India to undermine Pakistan's sovereignty and national interests extend beyond PSYOP, encompassing advanced technologies, nuclear arms races, logistics, support for terrorist organizations, intelligence operations, deception, and propaganda.

The misuse of propaganda involves manipulating public opinion through media, leveraging the principles of public relations and psychology. Psychological warfare operates through propaganda as its medium and communication as its content, with the primary objective being to persuade the target audience with carefully crafted messages. Modern media, with its ability to target specific groups or individuals precisely, is a powerful tool in this domain.

Artificial intelligence, in particular, has transformed perceptions across South Asia and amplified regional tensions. Intelligence agencies are instrumental in achieving this precision by collecting data on target audiences, thereby increasing the psychological impact on adversaries. However, these strategies also heighten the risk of unintended conflicts by provoking responses from opposing forces.

Addressing the evolving fronts in the Indo-Pak rivalry, including psychological warfare and its associated technologies, is crucial to mitigating these

risks and achieving regional stability. Effectively managing these issues fosters peace and reduces South Asian tensions.

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Pakistan-Russia Relations within the Framework of the SCO: A Regional Analysis

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Abstract

Pakistan and Russia have shared geographical proximity, but historically, this proximity did not translate into extensive cooperation due to Pakistan's alignment with the Western bloc during the Cold War and India's strong relations with Russia. Pakistan's official membership in the Russian-cofounded Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 2017 marked a significant development in bilateral relations. While considerable research exists on the SCO and its progress, studies focusing specifically on Pakistan-Russia relations through the SCO framework remain limited. Pakistan's membership in the SCO coincided with important regional developments, including the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan, the resurgence of regional terrorism, increased US-China competition, India's strengthening ties with the U.S., the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and the hesitancy of Western countries to engage with Russia. An analysis of Pakistan-Russia relations from 2015 to 2024, grounded in the theory of complex interdependence, indicates progress in cooperation and potential for enhanced collaboration in areas such as security, energy, and cultural exchange. Shared interests in China and the Central Asian region also highlight the possibility of increased regional cooperation through the SCO platform. However, several factors have posed challenges to furthering these relations, including tense Indo-Pak relations, India's membership in the SCO and historical ties with Russia, perceptions of Pakistan's susceptibility to external pressures, and regional instability linked to terrorism. Addressing these challenges requires proactive engagement to fully leverage the opportunities presented by the SCO to encourage Pakistan-Russia relations and collaboration.

Keywords

Introduction

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has been a significant regional body in the Eurasian region. Two major global powers, Russia and China, are members of this organization and several Central and South Asian countries. Russia served as a

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founding member of the SCO, while Pakistan was admitted in 2015 and officially joined in 2017. The SCO's scope encompasses various objectives, including security cooperation and fostering economic engagement among its members. Although substantial research exists on the SCO's various dimensions and progress, there is limited analysis of how the organization shapes the relationships between specific member states. Studies examining the dynamics of Pakistan-Russia relations through the SCO framework are particularly scarce.

This article addresses this research gap by analyzing the relationship between Pakistan and Russia within the context of their joint membership in the SCO. It uses academic literature to explore the opportunities and challenges in Pakistan-Russia relations, employing regionalism and the 'theory of complex interdependence' as analytical frameworks. The study focuses on developments from 2015 to 2023.

The article is structured into three main sections, followed by an analysis and conclusion. The first section examines the historical context of Pakistan-Russia relations, the role of the SCO, and Pakistan's membership in the organization. The second section evaluates the prospects for Pakistan-Russia relations within the SCO framework, focusing on recent developments. The third section discusses the challenges hindering or disrupting progress in these relations. Finally, the conclusion synthesizes the discussion and presents the study's findings.

Pakistan-Russia Relations in the Context of SCO

This section examines two overarching themes: the historical context of Pakistan-Russia relations and the role of the SCO in shaping their contemporary significance. Understanding the historical evolution of this relationship is critical to appreciating its current dynamics.

The bilateral relationship between Pakistan and the Soviet Union began to develop shortly after Pakistan's independence. In 1949, the Soviet Union extended its friendship by inviting Pakistan's Prime Minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, for an official visit. Although Liaquat Ali Khan initially planned to visit the Soviet Union, he ultimately chose to visit the U.S. (Khan, 1961). This decision marked a turning point. During the Cold War, Pakistan's subsequent alignment with the U.S. through a defense partnership in the 1950s hindered the development of closer ties between Pakistan and the Soviet Union (Iqbal, 2021). Nevertheless, diplomatic relations between the two states continued to persist.

Economic cooperation between Pakistan and the Soviet Union began in the 1960s. A notable milestone during this period was the signing of an agreement on oil trade. Additionally, the Soviet Union played a significant role during the Indo-Pak War, strengthening bilateral relations. The 1970s witnessed a marked improvement in these ties. In 1971, both nations signed a historic agreement in which the Soviet Union committed to providing technical and financial assistance for establishing a steel mill in Karachi. This agreement signaled a significant shift in Pakistan's foreign policy. Subsequently, in 1972, Pakistan's Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, visited the Soviet Union to bolster bilateral relations further. Bhutto's administration marked a strategic pivot in Pakistan's foreign policy, which had traditionally been pro-Western, toward greater engagement with the Eastern bloc (Sattar, 2010).

Several factors influenced this shift in foreign policy under Bhutto. Among these were Pakistan's aspirations to establish greater foreign policy independence and diminish the U.S. influence. Another key consideration was the desire to counterbalance India's growing military capabilities, bolstered by Soviet support (Haqqani, 2005). While Pakistan maintained close ties with the U.S. during Bhutto's tenure, his government pursued a diversified foreign policy to strike a balance by fostering relations with the Soviet Union (Amin, 2021).

Despite these advances, the relationship faced significant challenges. The Soviet Union's close ties with India during the Cold War posed a critical obstacle, particularly given the ongoing Kashmir dispute. Pakistan perceived Moscow's provision of military and economic assistance to India as a bias that undermined its interests in the region. This perception strained bilateral relations. Additionally, the U.S. viewed Pakistan's increasing engagement with the Soviet Union as a potential threat, interpreting it as a departure from the capitalist bloc and an alignment with the Eastern bloc (Amin, 2021).

The relationship between Pakistan and the Soviet Union remained hostile from 1979 to 1988, coinciding with the Soviet invasion and subsequent war in Afghanistan. In 1979, the Soviet Union intervened militarily in Afghanistan to support the communist government. This action significantly strained relations, as Pakistan, under the leadership of General Zia-ul-Haq, actively opposed the Soviet invasion. Pakistan became a key ally of the U.S. in the region and provided frontline support to the Mujahideen fighting against Soviet forces (Hilali, 2017).

Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, a new phase in Pakistan-Russia relations began to emerge, characterized by a shift in dynamics and the creation of opportunities for renewed engagement (Iqbal, 2021). The post-Cold War era witnessed consistent growth in economic ties between the two countries. In this context, Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali, then Foreign Minister of Pakistan, visited Russia, followed by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. These meetings focused on exploring prospects for economic cooperation. Positive developments continued into the post-9/11 period. In 2003, President Pervez Musharraf visited Russia, paving the way for the establishment of joint working groups aimed at addressing terrorism, managing strategic instability, and fostering cultural cooperation.

Further milestones in bilateral relations included the visit of Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov to Pakistan in 2007—the first visit by a Russian premier. This was followed by a visit to Moscow by President Asif Ali Zardari in 2011, underscoring the progress in the bilateral relationship. In 2012, President Vladimir Putin planned to visit Pakistan to attend a quadrilateral summit involving Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan to discuss the situation in Afghanistan. However, the visit was canceled, with the official explanation citing technical issues related to the summit. Some analysts, however, attributed the cancellation to pressure from the Indian Prime Minister at the time, Manmohan Singh (Hanif, 2013). This episode reflects two persistent themes in Pakistan-Russia relations: shared regional interests, particularly concerning Afghanistan and Central Asia, and the influence of Indian hostility as a limiting factor.

Beyond bilateral relations, Pakistan and Russia have cooperated in international organizations. Pakistan supported Russia's observer status in the Organization of

Islamic Cooperation (OIC), while Russia reciprocated by facilitating Pakistan's observer status in the SCO (Razil, 2022). Russia has also shown interest in regional energy projects, such as the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline and the Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) pipeline. A landmark development in their relationship was Pakistan's formal inclusion as a full member of the SCO in 2017, making it the only regional organization where Pakistan and Russia are permanent members.

However, potential roadblocks remain that could hinder the progress of their relations. Both countries harbor grievances that act as barriers to deepening cooperation. This research seeks to identify the driving forces behind these states' foreign policies, examining the conditions under which their relations improve or deteriorate. The role of global powers, particularly the U.S., is critical, as the Pakistan-Russia relationship has implications for the U.S.' strategic interests (Ahmad & Hashmi, 2021). Similarly, the roles of India and Afghanistan have been consistently influential and merit further exploration (Hanif, 2013). Additionally, the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict represents another significant challenge, as Western countries exert pressure on South Asian states, including Pakistan, to limit engagement with Russia (Shah et al., 2022).

Nonetheless, Pakistan's membership in the SCO marks a significant milestone in its relationship with Russia. Pakistan's close ally, China, is also a member of the SCO, which positions the organization as a platform for fostering regional cooperation and connectivity. For Russia, the SCO underscores Pakistan's strategic importance as a regional partner, particularly given Moscow's interests in the Central Asian Republics (CARs) and regional integration (Skalamera, 2023).

While considerable academic work exists on the SCO, few studies have specifically examined bilateral relationships through the lens of joint membership in this multilateral organization. Although the SCO represents the only regional platform shared by Pakistan and Russia, research addressing the opportunities and challenges in their relationship within the context of this institution remains limited. This study seeks to address this gap by analyzing the evolution of Pakistan-Russia relations in the framework of their joint membership in the SCO, highlighting both the potential and the challenges this dynamic presents.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)
The SCO is currently the largest and most populous regional cooperative organization globally, encompassing nations that account for over 40% of the global population and more than 20% of the global GDP (IIS, 2018). The SCO originated from the shared aspirations of former Soviet states and China to establish a platform for regional collaboration, initially leading to the formation of the 'Shanghai Five' in 1996 (Bailes et al., 2007). Although the group initially focused on resolving border disputes, its mandate expanded significantly with the inclusion of Uzbekistan, ultimately evolving into the SCO in 2001 (Jia, 2007).

The 2002 Charter of the SCO outlines its objectives, which include fostering regional cooperation in areas such as security, economics, and culture, all while adhering to the principles of the 'Shanghai Spirit'—a framework emphasizing mutual

trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, and respect for cultural diversity (Xue & Makengo, 2021).

While Russia has been a founding member of the SCO since its inception, Pakistan's membership was formally approved in 2015. The SCO is the only regional international organization where both Pakistan and Russia are permanent members, underscoring its significance for bilateral relations. Russia's endorsement of Pakistan's membership in the SCO marks a critical juncture in their relationship, highlighting shared interests and the potential for enhanced cooperation across various domains. These factors, among others, will be explored in the following sections.

Prospects of Pakistan-Russia Relationship in SCO's Context

One promising avenue of Pakistan and Russia's joint membership in the SCO is the opportunity for cultural exchange. Historically, no precedent or aspect of Russian culture precludes the possibility of cultural exchange programs with South Asian states. Russia has a well-established history of successful cultural exchange programs with India (Chaliha, 2021). If such programs have flourished in India, there is significant potential for similar initiatives in Pakistan.

An additional prospect for cultural exchange arises from Russia's sizeable Muslim population, comprising immigrants and native citizens. Muslim communities in Russia maintain strong cultural and religious practices, including the establishment of mosques and adherence to traditional customs such as Hijama[3], and the organization of religious institutions (Turaeva, 2020). With over 13 million Muslims in Russia sharing cultural and religious affinities with Pakistan, the potential for collaboration in cultural, religious, and societal domains is substantial (Hunter, 2016).

The SCO offers a platform to deliberate on the specifics of these programs and facilitate their implementation. Potential initiatives include tourism development, academic exchanges, and scholarship programs. A concrete step in this direction was taken when the Russian ambassador to Pakistan and Pakistan's Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture agreed to launch cultural exchange programs and foster cooperation in cultural heritage (Associated Press of Pakistan, 2023).

Historical precedents for Pakistan-Russia cultural cooperation further strengthen this prospect. For instance, the Soviet magazine Tulu, which was published in Karachi until 1982, and the significant influx of Soviet tourists to Pakistani cities like Karachi during the pre-1980s period reflect prior people-to-people engagement (Hussain, 1987; Hussain & Fatima, 2015). Although Cold War dynamics disrupted these exchanges, the potential for renewal exists today. The presence of Pakistani students in over a dozen Russian universities and establishing an Urdu faculty at Moscow State University signify steps in the right direction (Hussain & Fatima, 2015).

Defence Cooperation Under the SCO Framework

A core aim of the SCO is fostering security cooperation, and historical instances of Pakistan-Russia defense collaboration provide a foundation for further development. The American withdrawal from Afghanistan, particularly following the 2014 reduction

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[3] It is a Sunnah-backed version of cupping therapy in which small incisions allow for the suction of stagnant blood from the human body.

of NATO forces, coincided with a renewed understanding between Pakistan and Russia to enhance defense ties. This led to the signing of a Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA) in 2014 (Qazi & Bashir, 2022). The subsequent regional realities, including the complete U.S. withdrawal and the instability in Afghanistan, created mutual concerns for Pakistan and Russia, offering further opportunities for defense cooperation.

High-level engagements between Pakistan and Russia reached a milestone in 2018, with the Pakistani Army Chief, Vice Chief of Naval Staff, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee visiting Russia. In the same year, the formation of the Pakistan-Russia Joint-Military Consultative Committee (JMC) marked a significant institutional step. Chaired by the Russian Deputy Defence Minister and Pakistan's Defence Secretary, the JMC has since held multiple direct meetings (Siddiqa, 2021).

The most notable example of Pakistan-Russia defense cooperation is the Druzhba or 'Friendship' joint military exercises, conducted annually since 2016. Despite Indian objections and pressure on Russia to withdraw from these exercises due to alleged Pakistani involvement in Indian security issues, the collaboration has persisted, with six exercises held by 2021. Furthermore, in 2022, Pakistan agreed, alongside other SCO member states, to take concrete measures against terrorism originating from Afghanistan, highlighting mutual concerns regarding regional security threats (Rauf & Tariq, 2023).

The SCO also provides institutional opportunities for defense cooperation through its annual Defence Ministers' Meeting. Pakistan's decision to attend the 2023 session, hosted by India, virtually rather than withdrawing altogether underscores the significance of these meetings. These meetings have enabled Pakistani and Russian defense ministers to engage on the sidelines, discussing avenues for further cooperation.

There is also an all-important Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) within the SCO, which is of mutual concern to both Pakistan and Russia. Zeb (2006) explained that under the SCO framework, there is a possibility of progress in Pakistan-Russia security and defence ties that have remained underdeveloped due to the Indo-Russian strategic relationship and India-Pakistan hostility. The SCO may also contribute significantly to further developing Pakistan's anti-terrorism capabilities, mainly through the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS). Although Pakistan has signed bilateral anti-terrorism cooperation agreements with some SCO member states, RATS could help Pakistan institutionalize anti-terrorism cooperation comprehensively and on a broader scale. Hence, security cooperation between Pakistan and Russia is possible. It is important to note that some political analysts have compared the SCO with the Warsaw Pact and predicted that the SCO would turn into a counterbalance to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (De Haas & van der Putten, 2007; Dauekeev, 2011).

Although the SCO is a multilateral platform, there can be opportunities to strengthen bilateral ties. The heads of the member states frequently hold and attend sessions of the SCO. Opportunities remain on the sidelines of these sessions for one-on-one meetings and discussions on bilateral ties. Similar opportunities also exist during multilateral meetings at other levels, e.g., the SCO hosts an annual defence ministers' meeting, and defence ministers of the two countries can meet on the sidelines

of that event. Pakistan and Russia used one such opportunity to use multilateral forums to improve bilateral ties when the Pakistani Prime Minister met the Russian President on the sidelines of the SCO session in 2022.

Scholars agree that Pakistan's inclusion in the SCO has provided Pakistan and Russia with the highest level of dialogue to improve their bilateral relationships (Dedov, 2019). Moreover, scholars are keen to highlight why Pakistan is important for Russia and its regional and global ambitions. One of the regional aims of Russia is to become a major and stable power in the greater Eurasian region. Moreover, China's closeness with Pakistan is not lost on Russia and is a pivotal factor that drives the current Russian interest in Pakistan (Efremenko, 2019; Batool, 2021).

Pakistan is a developing nation with the sixth largest population in the world. Due to a lack of capacity and increasing needs, it remains in a dire search for energy project partners. One of the primary features of the billion-dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is its offerings in terms of energy production to Pakistan (McCartney, 2022). Russia has abundant natural resources that can be instrumental in bridging the gap between Pakistan's energy production and requirements. With the war in Ukraine, sanctions, and disinterest in dealing with Russia by the Western states, there remains an opportunity for Pakistan and Russia to move ahead on energy cooperation, as Pakistan might get cheaper prices from Russia, and Russia has fewer options to deal with.

One of the hallmark projects of Pakistan-Russia energy cooperation is the PakStream Gas Pipeline Project (PSGP), a 1,100-kilometer-long liquefied natural gas (LNG) transport pipeline extending from Karachi and Gwadar to Lahore. The original agreement for this project was reached in 2015—the same year Pakistan formally joined the SCO—while the details of the current agreement were finalized in 2021 (Chia & Haqiqi, 2021). Despite logistical, technical, and international challenges delaying its implementation, Pakistan's urgent energy needs and European concerns about over-reliance on Russian gas create a conducive environment for advancing this initiative. While the project is not a direct outcome of the SCO, the organization's platform could help address obstacles impeding its realization. Notably, the project's conception and progress coincide with Pakistan's inclusion in the SCO, underscoring its significance as the most substantial energy cooperation agreement between Pakistan and Russia since the Soviet Union's engagement in the 1970s.

Mutual Interests in Central Asia

Pakistan and Russia also share mutual interests in Central Asia, which is strategically and economically significant. Russian policy towards the Central Asian Republics (CARs) consistently aims to maintain close ties with these states, which share geographical proximity with Pakistan. At one point, only the 20-kilometer-wide Wakhan Corridor of Afghanistan separated Pakistan from direct access to these republics. Central Asia is rich in energy resources, and Pakistan's increasing engagement with these states can benefit from Russian facilitation.

Russia's interest in fostering connectivity between Pakistan and the CARs is driven by its dual objectives: maintaining regional stability and advancing its ambitions for Eurasian integration (Galimov, 2024). These republics represent vital opportunities for Pakistan to secure energy and trade partnerships. Moreover, Pakistan can provide the

CARs with access to the Indian Ocean, offering a vital trade route through its infrastructural projects, particularly the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). As an aspiring partner in CPEC, Russia could play a crucial role in facilitating Pakistan's integration with Central Asia through the SCO platform (Fayyaz, 2023).

Russia's aspirations to remain a significant player in a multipolar world order and its goal of maintaining influence in Central Asia position Pakistan as an important regional partner. By aligning its strategic ambitions with Pakistan's geographical and infrastructural advantages, Russia enhances its prospects for deeper regional integration and stability (Sultana et al., 2019; Federov, 2009).

Since its inception, Pakistan has maintained cordial ties with China, a relationship that persisted even through the Sino-Soviet split during the Cold War. In recent years, Pakistan's alignment with China has deepened, particularly in the context of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and strengthening the U.S.-India strategic partnership. This closer relationship aligns with China's broader goal of regional integration, exemplified by its ambitious One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative. OBOR aims to connect Europe with Asia through extensive infrastructure projects, trade routes, and economic zones inspired by the historic Silk Route. A flagship project of OBOR, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), envisions billions of dollars of infrastructural investment in Pakistan, culminating in establishing Special Economic Zones (SEZs). Many analysts regard CPEC as a transformative project for Pakistan's economy and infrastructure development.

Russia's Turn to the Global South and Shared Interests with Pakistan

Amid growing criticism and resistance from the Global North due to its actions in Ukraine, Russia has increasingly sought to expand its diplomatic influence in the Global South. Simultaneously, Pakistan faces many crises, including energy shortages and food insecurity, leaving limited options to explore emerging opportunities globally (Konwer, 2023).

However, Pakistan's strategic importance is not the sole factor driving Russia's interest in fostering closer ties. In 2016, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced the Greater Eurasian Partnership, a plan to integrate the five-member Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) with countries such as Pakistan, India, Iran, China, and Commonwealth states (Chia & Haqiq, 2021). Scholars argue that Russia envisions a future merger of the EEU with China's OBOR initiative, reflecting its alignment with China's vision for regional economic integration (Cooley et al., 2022). As a member of OBOR, Russia has demonstrated support for the initiative and recognizes its potential for enhancing connectivity and economic cooperation (Lesmana & Dharmaputra, 2022).

The Broader Geopolitical Context

Russia and China's shared tensions with the U.S.-led Western bloc underline the call for closer collaboration in the broader geopolitical landscape. Their extensive cooperation through the SCO further solidifies this alliance (Khan & Sultana, 2021). Given Pakistan's strategic partnership with China, Russia has shown increasing interest in developing positive relations with Islamabad. Pakistan's historical role in facilitating

the U.S. opening to China in the 1970s demonstrates its potential to serve as a bridge between Russia and China in the Eurasian region.

Pakistan's shared membership with China and Russia in the SCO and its ability to link OBOR to Russia through CPEC further enhance its pivotal role in fostering this trilateral partnership. By leveraging its geographic and strategic position, Pakistan gains significant economic and geopolitical benefits while contributing to broader Eurasian integration and cooperation.

Challenges to Pakistan-Russia Relations and the SCO

Both South Asian members of the SCO—Pakistan and India—remain entangled in deep socio-political animosity. This hostility has already hindered the progress and effectiveness of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Despite their membership in the SCO, the organization does not directly provide avenues for resolving bilateral disputes, as its focus remains multilateral. On the contrary, the persistent hostility between India and Pakistan challenges Pakistan's progress within the SCO and complicates improvements in Pakistan-Russia relations. For instance, both countries initially attempted to block each other's inclusion in the SCO (Mughal, 2021).

Indo-Pak Rivalry and Its Impact on Pakistan-Russia Relations

Recent academic literature increasingly frames Pakistan's membership in the SCO within the context of potential opportunities for strengthening Pakistan-Russia-China ties and the repercussions this may have for India (Abbasi et al., 2020; Chaliha, 2021; Rizvi et al., 2022; Tariq & Mustafa, 2022; Abdulrab & Rasheed, 2023). Scholars argue that Pakistan's growing influence in the SCO, combined with its strategic partnership with China, poses a challenge to Indian interests. Consequently, India will likely employ diplomatic and strategic measures to counter Pakistan's influence within the organization.

The most significant manifestation of Indian hostility lies in its potential impact on Pakistan-Russia relations. Given its long-standing strategic partnership with Russia, India has previously sought to undermine improvements in Pakistan-Russia ties. A notable example occurred in the aftermath of the Pulwama attacks in 2019 when India unsuccessfully pressured Russia to withdraw from joint military exercises with Pakistan (Ahmed & Rasool, 2023). As such, advancing Pakistan-Russia relations will require tactful navigation of Indian efforts to disrupt progress.

The Role of the U.S.

Another challenge to Pakistan-Russia relations stems from the U.S. Historically, Pakistan has been a key ally of the U.S. joining military alliances during the Cold War and participating in the War on Terror. However, U.S.-Pakistan relations are best characterized as transactional, marked by oscillating patterns of cooperation and estrangement (Kasuri, 2015). Meanwhile, the U.S. has been a traditional rival of Russia, and recent advancements in Pakistan-Russia relations coincide with the American withdrawal from Afghanistan and a downturn in U.S.-Pakistan ties (Akhtar, 2022).

Scholars have identified patterns in Pakistan's foreign policy, suggesting that its relations with Russia often improve during periods of tension with the U.S. For instance, Pakistan grew closer to Russia in the mid-1960s following its disappointment with American support during the 1965 war, only to pivot back to the U.S. with renewed aid commitments in the late 1960s (Khan, 2021). Russia is aware of these shifting dynamics and remains cautious of Pakistan's ability to maintain an independent foreign

policy (Smith, 2011). Trust-building measures will be essential for Pakistan to assure Russia of its commitment to constructive engagement via the SCO, regardless of U.S. opposition.

The ongoing war in Ukraine has further strained U.S.-Russian relations, with the U.S. likely exerting pressure on Pakistan to limit its engagement with Russia. A widely discussed instance occurred in 2022, when former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan claimed the U.S. opposed his administration's efforts to improve ties with Russia, allegedly contributing to his removal from office (Malik, 2024). Whether or not these claims are substantiated, they highlight Pakistan's geopolitical complexities in balancing its relations with Russia and the U.S.

Internal Security Challenges and Regional Instability
Pakistan's internal security situation presents another challenge to its engagement with Russia and its progress within the SCO. The SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) defines terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism as core threats (Sadı & İspir, 2021). The resurgence of terrorist activities in Pakistan following the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan, coupled with attacks on Chinese nationals and infrastructure projects in Pakistan, could make Russia wary of engaging in extensive collaborations (Iqbal et al., 2024). These security issues delay Chinese projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and risk undermining Pakistan's credibility as a reliable partner within the SCO.

Additionally, Pakistan's reputation has suffered from allegations of harboring terrorist networks, exacerbated by India's efforts to portray Pakistan as a state sponsor of terrorism (Nadeem et al., 2021; Murtaza et al., 2022). Pakistan risks creating a trust deficit with potential partners such as Russia without addressing these narratives and improving its internal security conditions.

Broader Geopolitical Context: Afghanistan and the Russia-Ukraine War
Regional instability, particularly in Afghanistan, further complicates Pakistan-Russia relations. Afghanistan's neighbours, except Turkmenistan, are SCO member states, making regional stability a shared priority. Researchers argue that the SCO can potentially play a constructive role in addressing the Afghan crisis (Akhtar & Javaid, 2024). However, Pakistan faces the challenge of balancing its historical ties with the Taliban regime and regional apprehensions regarding terrorism emanating from Afghanistan. A failure to manage this balance could undermine Pakistan's standing in the SCO and its relations with Russia.

The ongoing Russia-Ukraine war also poses significant challenges. With the war at a stalemate, Western sanctions have severely impacted Russia's economic capabilities (Malik, 2024). These sanctions raise questions about Russia's capacity to fulfil its regional integration ambitions, particularly its involvement in projects requiring substantial financial investment, such as CPEC. Furthermore, Pakistan faces immense Western pressure to limit its engagement with Russia and align itself with the U.S.-led bloc. These factors threaten the recent progress in Pakistan-Russia relations and highlight the need for strategic diplomacy to sustain momentum through the SCO platform.

Analysis
The theory of complex interdependence is applied to analyze the relationship between Pakistan and Russia within the framework of the SCO. Since its inception by Nye and Keohane, the theory has undergone refinements to make it more sophisticated and

adaptable to the modern information age (Keohane & Nye, 1987; Keohane & Nye, 1998; Rogerson, 2000). The central proposition of this theory is that relationships between states in contemporary times are increasingly complex, rendering traditional methods of analyzing bilateral relationships insufficient.

Keohane and Nye (1973) propose three key mechanisms to understand modern state relationships:

- *Multiple Channels of Interaction*: Relationships between states are shaped by diverse actors and channels, extending beyond traditional state-to-state diplomacy.
- *Shifting Agendas:* The issues driving these relationships are dynamic and fluid, making it difficult to establish a clear hierarchy of priorities at any given time.
- *Reduction in Coercive Power*: Modern state relationships emphasize reducing reliance on coercive measures and hard power, favoring cooperative interdependence. This interdependence, however, is multifaceted and contingent on numerous factors.

The theory of complex interdependence provides a suitable framework for analyzing the evolving dynamics of Pakistan-Russia relations within the SCO context. First, the SCO itself serves as a multilateral platform, aligning with the concept of 'multiple channels' outlined by Keohane and Nye. Secondly, the agendas within this relationship are highly fluid, influenced by rapidly changing global developments, such as the Taliban's takeover of Kabul and the ongoing war in Ukraine. Finally, Pakistan and Russia have demonstrated a willingness to move away from hard power tactics in their bilateral relations, focusing instead on collaboration and mutual benefit.

Thus, the presence of complex interdependence within the region underscores the relevance of this theory in understanding the opportunities and challenges shaping Pakistan-Russia relations under the SCO framework.

Conclusion

This research paper has examined the developments in Pakistan-Russia relations since Pakistan's inclusion in the SCO in 2017. It has highlighted areas where Pakistan and Russia have made direct advancements in their bilateral relationship through the SCO and areas with untapped potential for further improvement. Additionally, the study has explored various hindrances and challenges that have, or could potentially, obstruct meaningful progress in Pakistan-Russia relations under the SCO framework.

The research concludes that while challenges exist, the opportunities and potential for strengthening Pakistan-Russia relations after Pakistan's inclusion in the SCO far outweigh these obstacles. Moreover, the challenges are not insurmountable but can be mitigated through prudent strategies and diplomatic acumen. For instance, the Indian factor, which poses a significant challenge to Pakistan-Russia relations, can be addressed through several avenues. Historical precedents demonstrate that Russia has shown a willingness to improve ties with Pakistan despite Indian pressure, as evidenced by the continuation of joint military exercises between Russia and Pakistan. Additionally, the growing India-U.S. strategic partnership and the resurgence of a Cold War-like rivalry between the U.S. and Russia create favorable conditions for Pakistan and Russia to develop their bilateral relationship without allowing Indo-Pak tensions to dominate.

The decisive factors for an enduring Pakistan-Russia regional partnership will likely include Russia's ability to balance its relationship with India and Pakistan's

capacity to maintain an independent foreign policy toward Russia, even in the face of external pressures from the U.S. A shared commitment to collaboration and strategically utilizing platforms like the SCO, Pakistan, and Russia can overcome these challenges and forge a more robust and cooperative regional partnership.

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Challenges in International Peace Operations: Strengthening Partnership Peacekeeping

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Introduction

International peace operations have evolved from basic ceasefire monitoring to addressing complex global challenges. Early missions, such as the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) to monitor the implementation of the Israel-Arab Armistice Agreements, established in May 1948, and the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), formed in January 1949, were mandated to monitor and enforce ceasefire agreements between conflicting parties (Ahmed et al., 2021; Dawson, 1987). These missions were primarily tasked with monitoring and reporting, while diplomatic efforts sought peaceful conflict resolution. Comprising military observers and lightly armed personnel, they focused on confidence-building and ceasefire enforcement. Additionally, peacekeepers were predominantly male, and troop-contributing countries were limited.

The United Nations (UN) has long served as a beacon of hope for the world's most vulnerable populations. Despite persistent challenges, it has made significant progress in sustaining this role. Since its first peacekeeping mission, the UN has deployed over 2 million peacekeepers from 125 countries to 71 missions across more than 40 nations, saving countless lives in the process (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2024).

However, the journey of UN peacekeeping has not been without its challenges. As global conflicts have become more complex and multifaceted, UN Peace Operations have had to adapt to an increasingly demanding environment. Today, peacekeeping missions are tasked with a broad range of responsibilities beyond maintaining peace and security. These include facilitating political processes, protecting civilians, disarming combatants, overseeing elections, monitoring human rights, rebuilding infrastructure, and restoring the rule of law.

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The Contemporary Landscape of Global Peacekeeping Operations

Several significant constraints and challenges mark the environment where the UN and its peacekeeping missions operate today. These factors have shaped the nature and effectiveness of POs, which must now navigate a complex and rapidly evolving global landscape. Since the end of the Cold War, the number of conflict zones has significantly increased. Out of the total 71 missions authorized by the UN, only 23 were launched during the Cold War era (from 1945 to 1991), a span of 46 years. In contrast, the remaining 48 missions have been initiated approximately 33 years since the Cold War ended. Notably, no new UN peacekeeping missions have been authorized since 2014, and only 11 remain operational as of the present (Peace Operations Training Institute, 2018; United Nations Peacekeeping, n.d.).

The surge in conflict zones has placed additional demands on the UN's peacekeeping capacity, stretching resources and operational capabilities to their limits. The growing scope of these mandates, described as 'Christmas Tree' by the UNSC, has placed immense pressure on 'traditional' peacekeeping. This shift towards more comprehensive and complex mandates has been further underscored by the 2015 report from then-Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, which declared that the UN had entered an era of *partnership peacekeeping* (United Nations, 2015). This new era highlights the increasing need for collaboration and partnerships in executing Peace Operations.

Concurrently, the UN has faced a reduction in funding and human resources for its POs, primarily due to decreased contributions from member states. The UN peacekeeping budget peaked at 8.3 billion USD in 2014-2015, but by the 2023-2024 fiscal year, it had declined to 6.1 billion USD (United Nations Peacekeeping, n.d., para. 7). This decline in funding is one of the key reasons for the lack of new peacekeeping missions authorized since 2014, besides the closure of a few existing missions.

The global geopolitical landscape has also contributed to the challenges faced by UN peacekeeping efforts. The power contestation among the Permanent Members of the UN Security Council (UNSC; P5) has resulted in significant fragmentation, undermining the strategic decision-making process within the UNSC. This further complicates the UN's ability to respond swiftly and decisively to emerging conflicts.

Moreover, the growing involvement of regional and sub-regional organizations, such as the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the G5 Sahel, the European Union (EU), and NATO, has added another layer of complexity. While these organizations can be crucial in addressing regional security concerns, the possibility of conflicting interests among these diverse players cannot be overlooked. Furthermore, the rise of private military companies (e.g., the Wagner Group) challenges UN peacekeeping by introducing well-equipped yet unaccountable actors. Their presence risks undermining UN credibility and complicating mission dynamics.

In addition to these challenges, the threat spectrum has expanded to include terrorist groups, religious extremist organizations, human traffickers, drug cartels, mercenaries, and other destabilizing forces. The use of asymmetric warfare tactics, such as Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), terrorist attacks, and the exploitation of human shields, has further complicated the security environment. The rise in attacks on peacekeepers is particularly alarming; since the inception of UN peacekeeping, 4,398 peacekeepers have lost their lives in the line of duty. Notably, 2,170 of these casualties occurred between 2004 and 2024, compared to 2,228 from 1948 to 2004, highlighting

the increasing frequency and severity of attacks on peacekeepers (United Nations, 2024).

The adverse effects of climate change, environmental disasters, and degradation have also contributed to the worsening security situation. These factors have led to forced migrations, food security crises, and heightened conflicts, further exacerbating the challenges faced by peacekeeping missions. Additionally, the spread of 'Misinformation, Disinformation, Malinformation and Hate Speech' (MDMH)[2] has disproportionately impacted POs. Negative perceptions about the intentions, operations, and effectiveness of UN missions erode the trust between local populations and UN personnel.

The Role of Partnerships in Contemporary Peacekeeping

While the UN remains the principal actor in global peacekeeping, it has never been the sole peacekeeper. *Partnership peacekeeping* is not a novel concept in which the UN collaborates with various external actors. Over 40% of peacekeeping missions have been non-UN missions, although the UN authorized, endorsed, and supported these operations. This collaborative approach has become essential to modern POs, reflecting the growing complexity of global conflicts and the need for a multifaceted response.

In *partnership peacekeeping*, non-UN elements (typically military forces) engage directly with violent factions to restore stability, creating the necessary conditions for the UN's multidimensional approach to address political, developmental, social, economic, and administrative issues. The complementary nature of these two efforts—military stabilization and comprehensive peacebuilding—has proven effective in many cases, as each component supports and enhances the other's ability to achieve long-term peace and stability in conflict zones. *Partnership peacekeeping* can take several forms, including:

- The contemporaneous deployment of both UN and non-UN forces within the same operational theater, working side by side to achieve common objectives.
- The sequential deployment of UN and non-UN forces, where one follows the other to ensure a seamless transition of responsibilities.
- The UN only provides non-UN partners with technical, financial, and logistical support.

The UN has undertaken numerous POs in partnership with regional organizations, coalitions of states, and individual member states, with varying degrees of success in stabilizing conflict zones. As discussed below, several notable examples of *partnership peacekeeping* illustrate the potential benefits and challenges.

Timor-Leste (1999-2000)

Following intense violence after the 1999 referendum, the UN's political mission, UNAMET, faced significant challenges in maintaining stability. In response, the UN Security Council authorized a multinational force led by Australia, known as INTERFET, to stabilize the situation. INTERFET's swift intervention effectively controlled the violence and created the conditions necessary for a comprehensive UN peacekeeping mission to follow. This sequential deployment allowed for the return,

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[2] For more information on MDMH, please visit:
https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training/rtp/mdmh

reconciliation, and reintegration of former rebels into the society and the conduct of elections, ultimately ensuring the return of normalcy to the country.

Sudan (2007-2011)

The UN-AU hybrid POs in Sudan, known as UNAMID, aimed to address the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. While the mission began with high hopes, it ultimately struggled to achieve its objectives. The contesting legitimacy between the UN and the AU disputes over the mission's mandate undermined its effectiveness. UNAMID highlights the challenges inherent in *partnership peacekeeping*, mainly when there is a lack of explicit coordination and alignment between partners.

Democratic Republic of the Congo (2013-2014)

The deployment of the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is another example of *partnership peacekeeping*. The FIB, a UN-backed force composed of troops from South Africa, Tanzania, and Malawi, was tasked with neutralizing armed groups, including the M23 rebel faction. The FIB's success in reducing the presence and capabilities of M23 created much-needed space for political processes to take place. Despite these efforts, the M23 rebel group has resurged, seizing significant territory in North Kivu and aggravating regional instability. This resurgence underscores the limitations of partnership peacekeeping. It highlights the need for comprehensive multidimensional mechanisms, such as the integration of partnership peacekeeping with long-term political and socioeconomic solutions to address the root causes of the conflict.

Somalia (2007-present)

The AU launched the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to stabilize the country, combat the extremist group Al-Shabaab, and support the establishment of a functioning government. However, AMISOM soon faced severe resource inadequacies. The UN provided critical support to the AU, first through logistical and financial assistance and later through direct support to the Somali government. This partnership has been instrumental in stabilizing Somalia despite the complex and evolving security environment.

Central African Republic (2014-2016)

In response to escalating violence in the Central African Republic (CAR), the UN deployed the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). Simultaneously, French Sangaris forces operated under a UN Security Council mandate to provide critical military support. The parallel deployment of these forces over two years significantly reduced violence in the country, demonstrating the effectiveness of *partnership peacekeeping* in addressing complex security challenges.

Assessing the Effectiveness of Partnership Peacekeeping

While substantial research has been conducted on traditional peacekeeping missions, the literature on *partnership peacekeeping* remains relatively limited, although the quality of studies in this area is steadily improving. A closer examination of partnership POs reveals both notable strengths and significant challenges. On the one hand, such partnerships help alleviate the burden on the UN by enabling it to share the load with other actors, thus providing a potential solution to the gridlock often experienced within the UNSC. On the other hand, these partnerships can also threaten the UN's reputation

and credibility in various ways, particularly when coordination and alignment between partners falters.

Partnership peacekeeping has become vital in addressing complex and prolonged conflicts, notably where the UN alone lacks the necessary resources or capacity. One key challenge for peacekeeping partnerships is assessing their effectiveness. The following table identifies key areas for evaluation.

Key Strengths of Partnership Peacekeeping

Partnership peacekeeping has emerged as a crucial strategy in addressing complex and protracted conflicts, particularly in regions where the UN alone may not have the resources or capacity to intervene effectively. The following table outlines the key strengths inherent in the peacekeeping partnership.

Table 1: Strengths of *Partnership Peacekeeping*

1.	*Proximity of Regional & Sub-Regional Forces*	One key advantage of *partnership peacekeeping* is the availability of regional and subregional forces geographically closer to the conflict zone. This proximity enables quicker deployment, which is crucial in addressing emerging crises in a timely manner.
2.	*Reduced Bureaucratic Barriers*	Regional and subregional forces often face fewer bureaucratic obstacles than UN operations, allowing for more rapid mobilization and intervention. This agility is particularly beneficial in high-stakes environments where swift action is required to prevent further escalation of violence.
3.	*Local Knowledge and Contextual Understanding*	Regional forces possess a deeper understanding of the historical, social, and cultural contexts of the conflict. Therefore, local knowledge allows them to tailor their responses more effectively, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the peacekeeping mission.
4.	*Political Influence*	Regional and sub-regional actors can exert significant political influence within their areas of operations. Their familiarity with local governance structures and political dynamics can facilitate diplomatic efforts and contribute to peacebuilding.
5.	*Standardized Training & Motivation*	Regional forces often benefit from relatively standardized training, equipment, and language, which enhances operational cohesion and reduces the risk of misunderstandings during joint missions. Moreover, these forces are typically highly motivated, as they have a vested interest in the stability of their region.
6.	*Complementarity of UN & Non-UN Forces*	When UN and non-UN partners are deployed sequentially or concurrently, they produce favorable outcomes. Non-UN partners, often military-heavy, can quickly respond to violent outbreaks and stabilize the situation, while the UN can focus on addressing

the political, social, and developmental aspects of peacebuilding. This complementary approach enhances the overall effectiveness of the mission, leading to more sustainable peace.

Challenges in Partnership Peacekeeping

Although *partnership peacekeeping* offers numerous advantages regarding resource sharing, local knowledge, and rapid deployment, it also presents significant challenges. These challenges—ranging from the limited long-term effectiveness of non-UN partners to the risks posed to the UN's reputation and operational coherence—highlight the need for careful planning, clear communication, and a shared commitment to the mission's objectives. Addressing these challenges will be crucial to the continued success of *partnership peacekeeping* as a strategy for addressing contemporary global conflicts (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Challenges in *Partnership Peacekeeping*

1.	*Sustaining Impact of Non-UN Partners*	UN peacekeepers can reduce violence independently, but their effectiveness improves with non-UN partnerships. However, non-UN forces, especially those with a military focus, may struggle to ensure long-term stability.
2.	*Competing Political and Economic Interests*	Competing political and economic interests among regional states and organizations in *partnership peacekeeping* may undermine mission impartiality and complicate adherence to human rights and neutrality principles.
3.	*Potential Risks to the UN's Credibility*	Non-UN partners, particularly those with a more militarized approach, may engage in tactics that negatively affect the image of the UN, hence undermining its credibility as a 'neutral' peacekeeper.
4.	*Security Risks to UN Personnel*	Non-UN partners' actions can jeopardize the security of UN personnel, as excessive force or high-handed tactics may provoke local hostility, endangering peacekeepers.
5.	*Operational Confusion*	The involvement of multiple actors with differing mandates, objectives, and operational cultures can create confusion and inefficiencies. Role ambiguity, miscommunication, and poor coordination between UN and non-UN partners may hinder mission effectiveness.

Enhancing Effectiveness in Partnership Peacekeeping

Despite the challenges posed by geopolitical fragmentation and the issues that have surfaced during various POs, studies consistently affirm that the UN remains the most credible and globally accepted organization capable of conducting multidimensional operations. Similarly, while *partnership peacekeeping* presents some challenges, its benefits vastly outweigh its drawbacks. Some of the key areas to focus on are elaborated below:

Table 3: Effectiveness in *Partnership Peacekeeping*

1.	*Global and Regional Leadership Alignment*	Global and regional leaders, including UN, UNSC, and African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) members, must acknowledge the gravity of current security challenges. While national interests persist, aligning on shared goals is crucial for effective peacekeeping; establishing robust mechanisms for collaborative and complementary operations is essential. The adoption of UNSC Resolution *2719* marks progress, enabling regional bodies, particularly the AU, to take more decisive action on regional security threats.
2.	*The Volatility of Mission Environments*	Mission areas will likely remain volatile, posing significant risks to peacekeepers and civilians. Effective mandate design, troop deployment, and resource allocation must account for these threats. Ambiguities, overlapping responsibilities, and resource constraints can undermine efficiency and cause partner friction.
3.	*Shift Toward Agile and Coordinated Deployments*	The future of large-scale UN missions remains uncertain, but the shift toward 'smart and well-equipped *partnership peacekeeping* is evident. Effective coordination between regional, non-UN, and UN forces enhances mission success and mitigates operational fragmentation.
4.	*Strengthening the Political Component of Peacekeeping*	Strengthening the political dimension of UN peacekeeping, particularly through the DPPA[3], is essential. Empowering DPPA to collaborate with regional and global partners can enhance conflict prevention by addressing root causes. Greater emphasis on Special Political Missions (SPMs) and proactive diplomatic engagement will be more effective and cost-efficient than post-crisis responses.
5.	*Redefining Success in Peacekeeping*	The notion of 'success' in peacekeeping requires more profound analysis. Research indicates that many missions deemed successful face renewed violence within a decade. Rather than measuring success by immediate stabilization, establishing resilient systems and structures to withstand future challenges should be emphasized.
6.	*Enhancing Training and Coordination*	Standardizing training across troop-contributing countries (TCCs) is crucial for effective peacekeeping. Joint pre-deployment training, especially for commanders and master trainers, enhances interoperability and mission readiness. Regional and international training bodies, guided by the UN ITS, must lead this effort. Additionally, TCCs should adapt training to counter asymmetrical threats in modern POs.

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[3] Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA): https://dppa.un.org/en

7.	*Importance of Local Context*	International organizations often lack the local expertise needed for effective strategy development. Engaging regional organizations and local stakeholders in planning and decision-making is essential. Understanding history, traditions, and culture profoundly ensures that strategies align with the local context.
8.	*Building Repositories of Best Practices*	TCCs, training institutions, and the UN should establish repositories of best practices and lessons learned from past missions. While each mission presents unique challenges, these resources can enhance decision-making, improve personnel safety, and increase mission success by minimizing redundant efforts.
9.	*Leveraging Technological Advancements*	Integrating advanced technology in peace operations is essential for improving intelligence gathering and information sharing. Prioritizing secure, interoperable communication systems ensures clarity and facilitates timely decision-making. Additionally, advanced nations should share counter-IED technology to enhance the safety and well-being of peacekeepers.
10.	*Countering Misinformation in Peacekeeping*	Misinformation on social media significantly threatens peacekeeping efforts, challenging even the most advanced nations engaged in POs. Technologically capable states must take decisive measures to counter social media manipulation. Additionally, stronger legislation may be required to regulate platforms enabling such activities.
11.	*Engaging with Local Communities*	UN and non-UN forces must be trained to consistently engage with local communities. Building trust is vital to effective peacekeeping. Such engagement fosters public confidence and consent, both essential for mission success.
12.	*Evolving Nature of Peacekeeping*	While POs are not combat missions, deployed troops must be equipped to handle inherent threats and uncertainties. With mandates to protect civilians, peacekeepers must respond swiftly and effectively. Effective modern peacekeeping depends on adapting to asymmetric warfare, emphasizing related initiative and innovation.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the evolving dynamics of UN POs, particularly emphasizing *partnership peacekeeping*. It has been argued that rising conflict zones and fragmentation within the UNSC have strained UN peacekeeping since the end of the Cold War. Furthermore, geopolitical divisions among the P5 hinder timely decision-making, necessitating external partnerships. In this context, *partnership peacekeeping* is a 'strategic necessity,' as no single entity can address the complexities of modern POs alone. The growing complexity of global conflicts, alongside the UN's diminishing capacity to address these challenges, underscores the need for collaborative

peacekeeping efforts. As a strategic approach, *partnership peacekeeping* must be recognized as a crucial mechanism for managing contemporary security threats. The discussed cases underscore the critical role of partnerships in addressing the complexities of contemporary conflicts, demonstrating their necessity in stabilizing volatile regions and facilitating the UN's broader peacebuilding agenda.

However, the challenges faced by operations like UNAMID and the FIB in the DRC illustrate the complications that can arise in *partnership peacekeeping*. It has been argued that these challenges often stem from issues such as contested legitimacy, unclear mandates, and the differing priorities and capacities of partners. Therefore, effective *partnership peacekeeping* requires careful planning, clear communication, and a shared understanding of objectives among all actors. While partnerships enhance POs through rapid regional deployments and context-specific responses, they also demand coordinated efforts to mitigate challenges such as operational ambiguities and the potential erosion of the UN's credibility.

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The Conflict in Mali: Causes, Actors, and Challenges

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Introduction

The Republic of Mali is a landlocked country located in the heart of the Sahel region (occupying Western and North-Central Africa), formerly known as French Sudan until its independence in 1960. The country of 21 million is a resource-rich region with its economic reliance on the primary sector, i.e., agriculture and raw materials—particularly gold and cotton (CIA, 2025). Moreover, it is an ethnically diverse country, with the Bambara (33.3%), Fulani (13.3%), and Sarakole (9.8%) being the dominant racial groups (Open Doors International, 2023).

Since its independence, the once democratic West African nation i.e., Mali, has been marred with conflict and instability. The fragile state has been plagued with conflict drivers such as poor governance and institutional breakdown, widespread insecurity, armed insurgencies, religious and social threat multipliers, geo-strategic factors, and climate hazards. Its precarious situation has been reflected in the Global Peace Index ranking 2024, which ranks it 154 out of 163 countries, placing it among the most conflict-affected countries (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2024, p. 2). The GPI, a standard for measuring peacefulness, has indicated Mali's low ranking based on three benchmarks, i.e., the level of violence, conflict intensity, and the degree of militarization. Henceforth, the indicators determine that the Mali state has been paralyzed by the in-fighting of armed groups, state forces, and foreign mercenaries, particularly in the North and the Centre.

In this regard, historical precedence commits to the chain of violence witnessed in Mali today. In this regard, the first substantial insurgency by the Tuareg (northern separatist group) occurred during the 1960s under the regime of the dictatorial Mobudo Keita, who was later on ousted in 1968 in a military coup (Barabanova, 2024). The new President Moussa Traore's regime also witnessed significant shortfalls and was deposed after the 1991 Mali revolution. The establishment of democratic rule marked the subsequent decades of the 1990s and 2000s, which were reflected in two elections. Regardless, persistent discriminatory policies against the ethnic groups in the North led to one of the most significant insurgencies and a simultaneous coup in 2012

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organized by Amadou Sanogo (Chauzal & Van Damme, 2015, p. 30). During this time around, the Northern separatists were emboldened by the aid received from non-state actors, i.e., Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AKIM), thus forming an independent state of "Azawad" in the North. This alliance was short-lived as Al-Qaeda started outmaneuvering the rebels by gaining more ground in the North (Congressional Research Service, 2024, p. 02).

Meanwhile, to supplant the Islamist insurgent advance, the French forces were deployed in 2013 to pursue a counterterrorism strategy, followed by a UN-led Peacekeeping mission, i.e., MINUSMA, to help stabilize the country (Klobucista & Bussemaker, 2020). The Malian government, coerced by international pressure, signed an Algerian-mediated peace deal with the ex-separatist in 2015, aimed at addressing the Turaeg ethnic group's grievances (political and economic) and reestablishing state writ in the Northern region (CFR, 2023). The agreement failed to fulfill the prerequisites, while the armed groups started to assert dominance in Central Mali. On the contrary, the political battleground was fraying due to the democratic backsliding witnessed by the two devastating military coups in 2020 and 2021.

Notwithstanding, the uncertain future of Mali compelled the French forces, the most active aid recipients of the Mali government, to leave in 2022. The exit of the French troops was accompanied by the end of the UN mission, MINUSMA, in 2023. Seeing the Mali government weakened, the new participants, i.e., the Wagner Group (Russian mercenaries), intensified their presence in support of the government. The arrival of the Wagner group signaled a renewed threat for the jihadist groups, which led to some of the deadliest clashes between the incumbent stakeholders, causing immense humanitarian consequences for the state of Mali. Recent clashes in July 2024 highlight the separatists' victory against the coalition of Malian armed forces and Russia's Africa Corps, exacerbating security constraints in an already unsteady state (ACLED, 2024).

In this regard, the significance of actors in intensifying conflict in Mali leads us to dissect the positions they hold to protect their security and identity needs. The Malian government and security forces, i.e., the FAMA (national army) and the gendarmerie, are major stakeholders that aim to cease hostilities and assume state writ in the North and South. It heavily relies on international powers to curtail the onslaught and guarantee citizens' security in a limited capacity. More so, the Islamist militants such as the AKIM, Ansar Dine, Jamaat Nosrat Al Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM), and the Katiba Macina groups, primarily dominant in the north, exploit religious and ethnic divisions to create chaos in the country and invoke their desire to establish Sharia law in Mali (Cold-Ravnkilde & Ba, 2022, p. 22).

Ethnically driven community militias such as Dana Amassagou, Ganda Koy, and Ganda Izo are also proactive actors who emerged to fight for their ontological and material needs confiscated by the state. Lastly, international forces, including the AU, ECOWAS, France, and the UN (MINUSMA), play a pivotal role in diplomacy and defusing tensions. The diagram below vouches for the above explanation.

Figure 1. Mapping the actors involved in MALI.
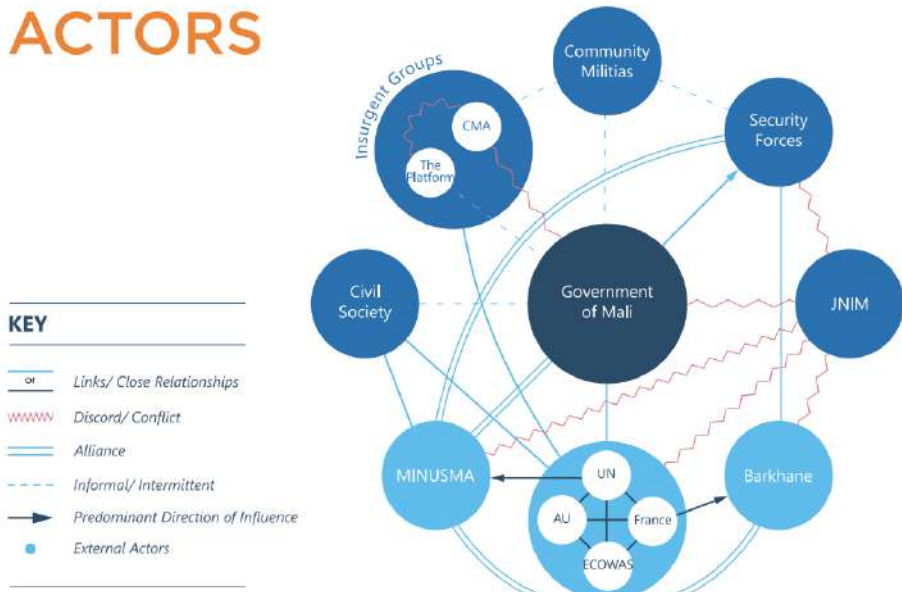
Source: Gebremichael et al. (2019, p. 06)

As evident in Mali, these stakeholders are incorporated in an interconnected loop of differing interests that directly and indirectly contribute to conflict drivers. The lack of essential service delivery from the Malian government in the form of food, water, healthcare, security, education, etc., has led to local communities resorting to parallel networks and illegal activities to fulfill their fundamental needs. In addition, the dysfunctional governance system in the North and South has allowed free rein to terrorist groups, insurgents, and proxy forces to exploit the region and gain local favor (Koloma, 2022, p. 06). Limited state presence has manifested corruption and influence peddling, further fragmenting public trust in the Malian government. Notwithstanding, other factors like population growth and unemployment have led to resource competition between the local communities. Adding on, environmental hazards such as erratic rainfalls, floods, and droughts have amplified the existing vulnerabilities of the Mali people, pushing many into poverty and desperation. Relative deprivation and reduced economic opportunities have negatively impacted the youth, thus fostering susceptibility to joining militant factions and engaging in criminality (Gebremichael et al., 2019, p. 04).

Furthermore, Mali's abundant natural resources like gold have added another dimension to the conflict as radical groups have pounced upon the opportunity to gain control over the lootable resource (FAO, 2021, p. 06). The traditionally tolerant Mali society has been ethnically and religiously polarized by extremist groups, which have assisted in divisive politics and inter-communal distrust. The international and regional actors such as the African Union, ECOWAS, the United Nations, France, and Russia's competing interests have systematically hindered efforts to resolve the conflict (Koloma, 2022, p. 23). Despite their efforts to secure and preserve peace in Mali, the

differing security strategies have, on the contrary, increased insecurity rather than resolved the root causes of the crisis.

These aggravating factors have not been a result of contemporary violent escalation but have been the product of years of negligence that has caused severe impacts on the social, political, and economic fabric of Mali. In this regard, a dire situation is witnessed in Mali as terrorists, insurgent factions, and government forces alike have committed extreme human rights abuses via unlawful killings, summary executions, destruction of infrastructure, and causing economic disruption through blockades of supply routes. These security risks have hampered humanitarian efforts as the continued crossfire threatens aid responders.

To illustrate the magnitude of conflict, statistics show that over 7.1 million people, including nearly 3.9 million children, require immediate humanitarian assistance (Assessment Capacities Project, 2024, p. 01). As of April 2024, data indicates that around 355,000 people were IDPs (Internally Displaced People) in Mali, amongst which 57% were women and 43% were children. In addition, 388 400 Mali refugees live in neighboring states, with a significant portion residing in Burkina Faso. Moreover, there was a 500% increase in protection incidents underscoring cases of forced marriages, FGM (Female Genital Mutilation), and gender-based violence in conflict-affected regions.

In addition, the basic needs assessment foresees that 7.1 million people face high food insecurity: 3.2 million lack clean water, and 11.2 million lack proper sanitation. The continued violence has affected education, with 536,000 students and 10,700 teachers being inadvertently impacted. Assessing the irreversible impact of conflict in Mali, the Human Development Index 2021 marks Mali as one of the poorest countries, with an overall score of 0.428 (BTI, 2024, p. 16). The economic domain is also ripped with challenges such as high unemployment, low industrialization, energy shortages, reliance on imports, inflation coupled with political instability, weak economic planning, and choking sanctions that have diminished any hope of socio-economic development and a stable national economy.

Conclusion

Mali's low ranking, i.e., 154th in the Global Peace Index 2024, reflects the severity and uncertainty of the ongoing crisis. The local and international conflict actors and their clashing interests have fueled insecurity, preventing resolution and reconciliation. The country profile of Mali emphasizes a multifaceted approach to dealing with the root causes of the protracted conflict. To address logistical challenges, the state and the regional and international community must ensure coordinated efforts to strengthen humanitarian action, pursue strategic counter-terrorism strategies, and provide financial resources to address security, humanitarian, and developmental challenges. Notwithstanding, the state must accept responsibility for failing to protect its citizens from violent forces. In this regard, to empower citizens and attain public trust, the Malian government must address long-standing issues such as regional inequalities, underdevelopment, political instability, dysfunctional governance, radical influences and armed insurgency, unemployment, refugees, and IDP dilemma. In this context, it is pertinent that achieving both negative peace (elimination of hostilities) and positive peace (building resilient structures for long-term peace and shared prosperity) should be the ultimate objective of the state (Schiffer, 2020). The rebuilding of Mali and enforcement of legitimacy would be gradual, but consistent and bottom-up approaches may alleviate conflict drivers and ensure sustainable peace.

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The Enduring Conflict in Somalia: Analyzing the Dynamics of Instability and the Path to Sustainable Peace

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The Federal Republic of Somalia, located in the Eastern Horn of Africa, has experienced prolonged conflict and instability for nearly three decades. As a result, the country ranks 153rd in the Global Peace Index (GPI) 2024, placing it among the least peaceful nations of the 163 states assessed (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2024, p. 11). The conflict formally began with the fall of Siad Barre's regime in 1991. However, conflicts rarely emerge suddenly, and the case of Somalia is no exception. The conflict is multifaceted, driven by a complex interaction of social, political, economic, and historical factors, which collectively present a bleak picture of humanitarian crises, political turmoil, and socioeconomic upheavals (Dersso, 2009, p. 1-6.) These dynamics have severe implications for the peace process in the region, further exacerbated by the involvement of international actors and the growing threat posed by militant Islamist groups. This essay examines the current conflict dynamics in Somalia, tracing their origins and analyzing them through the lens of the GPI 2024 peace indicators.

Many scholars attribute the Somali conflict to the colonial legacy. Before colonialism, Somalis were relatively peaceful (Adamu, 2009, p. 298). In 1885, the land was divided between the French, British, and Italians, without regard for the distinct identities of the Somali people when drawing borders. The Somali Republic was formed on July 1, 1960, following the unification of Italian Somaliland and British Somaliland. Somalis were identified primarily by their clan affiliations (e.g., Dir, Darod, Isaaq, etc.), and competition for resources among these clans and other actors was common. Clan militias existed, and under the Xeer system, elders mediated conflicts (European Union Agency for Asylum, 2022). Many Somalis were divided across state borders, further fueling conflict as they were separated from their patrilineal clan members.

Amid political turmoil, Siad Barre came to power through a coup in 1969. As a member of the Darod clan, he further polarized the clan-based system in Mogadishu

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(Osman & Souare, 2007). His regime, a repressive and brutal dictatorship, rejected clan politics and the indigenous identities of the Somali people. The state-operated under a 4.5 power-sharing formula, which persists. According to this system, four major clans occupied key political positions, while a fractional 0.5 was allocated to minorities. In 1976, Barre introduced the Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party to promote 'Scientific Socialism' in Somalia (Harvard Divinity School, n.d). However, his regime ultimately failed due to corruption, opposition from rival clans, defeat in the Ogaden War, a lack of legitimacy, and waning international support. His ousting in 1991 led to a power vacuum and the onset of civil war—one of the longest in African history. This collapse also paved the way for the independence of Somaliland and the establishment of Puntland as an autonomous region.

The civil war left Somalia in the hands of warlords. Peace talks took place with the intervention of the international community, including the United Nations, leading to the formation of the Transitional Government and the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in 2000 and 2004, respectively. In 2006, the Islamic militant group, the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), strengthened its presence in southern Somalia. With the support of the United States, the African Union, and Kenya, Ethiopia invaded Somalia in 2006 and successfully defeated the ICU. However, one of the ICU's offshoots, Al-Shabaab, gained territory in central and southern Somalia. Al-Shabaab's goal is to establish a Greater Somalia, overthrow the Somali government, and implement a strict Islamic state (Council on Foreign Relations, 2024).

The present conflict involves the forces of the TFG, which was replaced by the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) in 2012, and fundamentalist groups like Al-Shabaab. Al-Shabaab maintains strong ties with Al-Qaeda. The two conflicting parties differ in ideology, political objectives, and territorial control and have both committed significant human rights violations (Amnesty International, 2023). In 2011, Somalia was ranked as the world's most peace-deprived nation (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2011, p. 9), characterized by a state of war, the absence of a stable government, and pervasive violence. However, Somalia improved in subsequent years, rising to 158th out of 163 countries in the GPI 2020 report (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2020, p. 9). This improvement can be attributed to factors such as establishing the FGS, although challenges persist.

The GPI's 23 indicators are categorized into Militarization, Ongoing Conflict, and Social Safety and Security. Analyzing Somalia through these qualitative and quantitative indicators offers valuable insights into why the country ranks so low in the GPI 2024. These indicators reveal both direct and indirect violence in Somali society, which impedes the achievement of both negative and positive peace. Somalia is one of the poorest countries in the world, with 80% of its population living as refugees in neighboring states like Kenya and Ethiopia. At the same time, hundreds of thousands are internally displaced (USA for UNHCR, 2023). The country is also experiencing the worst drought in a century and is ranked the world's hungriest nation (Global Hunger Index, 2024, p. 15). Violent demonstrations, particularly by Al-Shabaab, have intensified, with the deadliest occurring in 2022. Other groups, such as the Islamic State and unrest in Somaliland, further fuel clan violence (Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, 2023). This situation is illustrated in Figure 1 (ACLED, 2024).

Figure 1. Inter-Clan Clashes in Somalia (1 June 2023-26 July 2024)
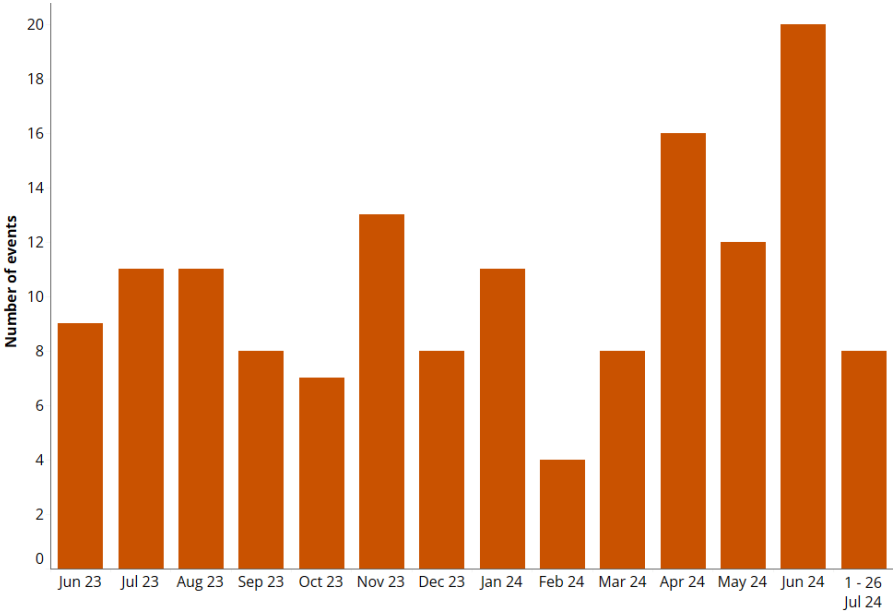

Source: Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (2024)

Surprisingly, Somalia has improved its ranking regarding the impact of terrorism. It is now ranked as the 7th most terrorized country globally—an alarming position but four places lower than in previous years (Global Terrorism Index, 2024, p. 8).

Somalia remains in the process of state-building. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), violence in various parts of the country has led to an increase in conflict-related deaths (Human Rights Watch, 2023). Although Somalia has not been involved in any state-to-state wars in 2024, the ongoing threat from Al-Shabaab has increased militarization. Somali society itself is militarized, with clan militias playing a significant role. The Somali National Army (SNA) is undergoing reforms but remains dependent on external support from the United States, Turkey, and the African Union Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). Somalia's GDP remains lower than that of many other African nations, as shown in Figure 2 (Urama et al., 2024, p. 21).

Figure 2. Somalia's GDP Compared to African Nations
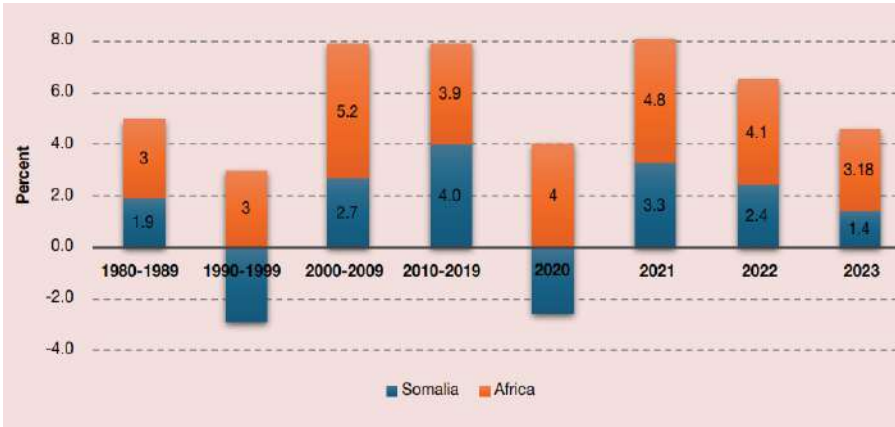
Source: Urama et al. (2024)

The incarceration rate in Somalia is not exceptionally high, not due to effective law and order but because of limited data availability. Prisoners are often held in small cells with inhumane living conditions. The criminality index in Somalia remains significant compared to other African states, though its resilience score has improved. Somali society is also plagued by human trafficking, the possession of illegal weapons, and the illicit trade of pharmaceuticals and flora. Drug trafficking, while not widespread, has been observed in some cases.

The country is a hotspot for transnational crimes such as piracy, which has driven demand for illegal weapons. Al-Shabaab disrupts internet access in areas under its control and has been involved in hacking government websites. Due to the absence of cybersecurity measures, Somalia is vulnerable to cybercrime. Tax evasion and financial crimes are prevalent, and law enforcement remains weak. The judicial system is deeply corrupt, undermining the social contract and perpetuating instability. Somalia remains a dangerous place for journalists, with limited press freedom and a high homicide rate (Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2023).

The United Nations continues to support Somalia through various agencies, including UNOSOM I & II, UNSOM, UNICEF, and UNDP. Recently, at the request of the Somali government, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) agreed to transition UNSOM into the United Nations Transitional Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNTMIS), which will continue its peace initiatives in Somalia until 2026 (UN, 2024).

Conclusion

The Somali conflict has persisted for decades, driven by both surface-level and deeply ingrained factors that have been simmering for years. Although there have been some signs of progress in specific indicators, the overall peace process remains hindered by the rise of extremism, the effects of climate change, the ongoing humanitarian crisis, weak governance, clanism, regional and external influences, competition for resources, and a lack of national unity. The Somali case study highlights the importance of addressing both negative and positive peace to achieve lasting stability. Despite some progress, the current situation remains insufficient to address the underlying issues. International efforts have not succeeded in ending the prolonged violent phase, as the

root causes of the conflict persist. Throughout these struggles, the civilian population has borne the brunt of the suffering over the past few decades.

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Martialling Peace: How the Peacekeeping Myth Legitimises Warfare
by *Nicole Wegner*

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Nicole Wegner, a lecturer and researcher at the University of Auckland's Faculty of Arts, Politics, and International Relations, focuses on Feminist International Relations, Gender, and Critical Military Studies. Drawing from these theories and concepts within the field of peace and conflict studies, she examines the myths and perceptions surrounding traditional peacekeeping. In her book, *Martialling Peace: How the Peacekeeping Myth Legitimises Warfare* (Wegner, 2023), she explores how these myths legitimize certain forms of violence while naturalizing and normalizing others. The author relies and focuses heavily on Canadian peacekeeping philosophy and practice, which informs the bulk of the concepts and themes that the author introduces, like martial peace and peacekeeping mythology/myth. The research uses discourse analysis as its methodology for studying the topic.

The first chapter delves into the inherent martial nature of peacekeeping, which often goes unnoticed due to its association with peace. The peacekeeping myth perpetuates and reinforces this martial dimension by advocating for the necessity of military violence to 'keep the peace,' thereby promoting a broader militaristic ideology. The author argues that peace is not a neutral concept but a political term that reflects the global political status quo. Peacekeeping is legitimized not by its practices or character but by its overarching objective of achieving peace. Often rooted in the concept of negative peace, martial peace becomes the primary goal of peacekeeping missions. While militarism and peace may appear as opposing concepts, they are deeply intertwined in practice and within global political structures.

The second chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the mythologization of the peacekeeping myth. Myths are often regarded as apolitical narratives or stories that shape collective consciousness, serving to normalize specific ideas or practices. Central to the peacekeeping myth are the following notions: peace is inherently desirable and attainable; military interventions are apolitical and conducted for the greater good; and peacekeepers are moral, legitimate, and impartial actors. The virtues and principles

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commonly associated with peacekeeping (non-violence, impartiality, and consent) further reinforce these perceptions.

The author contends that the deliberate perpetuation of these myths facilitates the proliferation of increasingly militarized forms of peace worldwide, all while deflecting critical scrutiny of the militaristic force employed. This chapter underscores the need for a critical examination of the practices and principles that sustain martial politics both within and beyond state boundaries, often under the guise of the justified use of force.

The third chapter examines Canada's identity as a peacekeeping nation. It explores how its peacekeeping ideology stems from and reinforces its national identity and culture through significant emotional and political investment in these practices. This investment is rooted in the symbolic values associated with peacekeeping, which align with Canada's collective self-image as a helpful and compassionate global actor. This national identity, in turn, sustains and amplifies Canada's peacekeeping ambitions, creating a powerful myth that shapes public and political perceptions of its military engagements. These engagements are often assumed to embody the same values and principles as peacekeeping operations, such as being 'helpful, innocent, and benevolent' (Wegner, 2023, p. 44).

The Canadian peacekeeping myth is actively reinforced by the government, media, and educational institutions. However, this myth has also demonstrated resilience by incorporating more combative operations and practices to promote peace and stability. This is evident in Canada's involvement in the War in Afghanistan and its treatment of Indigenous peoples, both of which reveal narratives steeped in neo-colonialist attitudes.

The chapter also highlights Lester B. Pearson's pivotal role in integrating peacekeeping into Canada's foreign policy objectives. The concept of a 'middle power' (Wegner, 2023, p. 59) in international relations theory is also discussed as a framework for understanding Canada's positioning. As a state unable to rival great powers but still capable of exerting influence over third-world nations, peacekeeping offers Canada a strategic opportunity to enhance its credibility and impact on the global stage.

The broader implications of the peacekeeping myth include its role in obscuring Canada's military history. However, the increasing reliance on military interventions and combat-oriented tactics threatens to undermine this carefully constructed narrative.

Chapter four discusses Canada's role in the Afghanistan War and how the political and military leadership attempted to adapt and shed the peacekeeping image to unfavourable results, ultimately reverting to the original formula of neutral, compassionate, and non-violent actors and 'white saviours' (Wegner, 2023, p. 76) In this chapter, the author observes the peacekeeping myth through gendered, racial, and colonial perspectives that attempt to explain and uncover truths behind the narratives portrayed by the media and political institutions in their attempts to position themselves as a source of good, peace, and stability. Humanitarian stories and troop sacrifices were used to silence or divert attention from the combative practices and approach of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). Canada attempted to shed the feminine peacekeeping persona in favour of a more masculine militaristic identity through the war in Afghanistan. This new identity was inherently racialized, that justified white justice, and reproduced the saviour complex associated with neo-colonial practices (Wegner, 2023, pp. 79-80).

Chapter five examines how the peacekeeping myth permeates the Canadian state, manifesting in violent military interventions against local Indigenous populations throughout various eras of Canadian statehood. The author argues that this myth functions as an instrument of state-building, transferring values and characteristics traditionally associated with the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Simultaneously, the depiction of Afghan terrorists as 'savages' is mirrored in the characterization of Indigenous tribes and communities seeking reparations and justice. In this narrative, the Canadian population is framed as the victim whose safety is allegedly under threat, thereby justifying protective measures by state forces.

The chapter highlights the close relationship between the CAF and the RCMP, noting that the latter has also contributed to UN peacekeeping missions. The author provides detailed accounts of militarized actions undertaken by the police while acknowledging the Indigenous communities' enduring resistance and their history of violent encounters with state forces. Historical events and clashes are discussed alongside unethical and immoral practices by the police, including excessive use of force, vigilantism, and under-reported incidents of sexual violence against Indigenous populations. Although these practices are less overt in contemporary times, the author contends that such tropes remain embedded within the norms and operations of these forces. The overarching narrative of maintaining order aligns with the concept of martial peace.

The author concludes by revisiting the key themes discussed throughout the book. Central to the analysis is the argument that the ostensibly peaceful image of peacekeeping is fundamentally flawed, deeply martial in nature, and requires a comprehensive restructuring. The author critiques the concept of 'peace' brought about by peacekeeping missions, describing it as materialized peace—a superficial state where reconciliation is absent, and root causes of conflict remain inadequately addressed. The book advocates for more rigorous academic scrutiny of existing peacekeeping literature and practices, urging the development of non-militarized peacekeeping models rooted in conflict resolution approaches. Additionally, the author emphasizes the importance of addressing the structural issues of conflict-stricken societies through justice and reparations.

One of the book's key strengths is its critical examination of the existing peacekeeping culture, norms, traditions, and literature, exposing their inherently militarized nature. The author effectively unmasks the martial underpinnings of peacekeeping practices, often concealed behind a facade of neutrality and benevolence. The critique highlights the dangers of militarized peacekeeping narratives and practices in conflict zones and liberal democracies.

The author's theorization of martialized peace—a fragile, short-term peace dependent on military presence and lacking cultural or structural transformation—provides a compelling explanation for the recurring failure of peacekeeping missions. This fragile peace often results in societal relapse into conflict, as the root causes remain unaddressed. Additionally, the book problematizes the self-perceived 'peace-loving' persona of major and middle-power liberal democracies, which is used to justify violence and militarized policing within their borders. This critique of the peacekeeping myth offers valuable insights into the narrative construction that enables such militarized practices.

Despite its contributions, the book is not without limitations. Its reliance on Canada as the primary case study is a significant flaw. While Canada offers an intriguing example—given its reputation for peaceful attitudes being ingrained in its national identity—this narrow focus limits the generalizability and transferability of the themes explored. The absence of a broader analysis of UN peacekeeping missions or even specific case studies of individual missions weakens the book's capacity to address the global scope of peacekeeping practices.

Furthermore, the author's attempt to reconcile Canada's internal violence against Indigenous populations with the broader critique of peacekeeping risks misdirecting the analysis. This focus may divert attention from the actual historical injustices faced by Indigenous communities, such as economic and social deprivation, political marginalization, and entrenched cultural discrimination.

The book highlights a critical gap in the literature concerning the myth-making surrounding peacekeeping and raises the fundamental question of why peacekeeping missions often fail. However, future research could benefit from exploring the neo-colonial undertones of peacekeeping missions and their racialized and gendered dimensions. Such analysis would deepen the understanding of the structural inequalities embedded in peacekeeping practices and their implications for conflict-affected societies.

While the book provides a critical lens for examining peacekeeping practices, a more expansive and comparative analysis of global peacekeeping missions would strengthen its arguments and broaden its applicability. Nonetheless, the work remains valuable to the discourse on peacekeeping, state-building, and the narratives underpinning militarized practices.

Japan's Peacekeeping at a Crossroads

by *Hiromi Nagata, Fujishige, Yuji Uesugi, and Tomoaki Honda*

*Muhammad Rayyan Faisal[1]

The book under review, *Japan's Peacekeeping at a Crossroads,* examines Japan's unique and unprecedented approaches to international peacekeeping doctrine. Authored by three distinguished Japanese scholars—Dr. Hiromi Nagata Fujishige, Yuji Uesugi, and Tomoaki Honda—the work provides a comprehensive analysis of Japan's peacekeeping efforts and its evolving role in the global peacebuilding landscape.

Dr. Fujishige holds a Ph.D. in Political Studies from SOAS University of London and a postgraduate diploma in War Studies. Her research interests encompass international peace operations, Japan's peacekeeping and peacebuilding policies, and broader issues in conflict resolution. Dr. Uesugi, a specialist in international conflict analysis, has both academic expertise and practical experience, having served in various peace missions as a peacebuilding practitioner. The third author, Tomoaki Honda, focuses on decision-making processes in international peace cooperation and peacebuilding. Together, these scholars bring extensive expertise to the study of peacekeeping and peacebuilding, particularly in the context of Japan's unique historical and political landscape.

The authors collectively trace the history of Japan's peacekeeping efforts and their gradual evolution within the nation's profoundly ingrained anti-militarism framework. This anti-militarist stance is rooted in the unprecedented destruction and trauma Japan experienced during World War II, particularly the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States. The authors argue that, despite significant domestic challenges, Japan has made concerted efforts to adapt to the shifting international emphasis on 'integration' and 'robustness' in peacekeeping operations. However, the growing insecurity faced by United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKOs) has led developed nations, including Japan as a member of the Global North, to reduce their troop contributions.

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The chronological narrative presented in the book suggests that Japan has reached a critical juncture in its constitutional interpretation regarding its participation in peacekeeping operations, particularly in roles perceived as prohibited under its pacifist constitution. The authors highlight the development of aversive attitudes toward violent conflict within a significant segment of Japanese society, a sentiment shaped by the nation's historical experiences and cultural values. Additionally, the book examines the strategic and incremental measures undertaken by the Japanese government to meet rising international expectations concerning UN peacekeeping operations. By situating Japan's peacekeeping efforts within its historical, constitutional, and societal contexts, the authors provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges and complexities Japan faces as it navigates the evolving landscape of international peacekeeping.

The book follows a convincing and well-structured path in developing its central argument. It begins by providing a succinct overview of Japan's national and international orientation within its security paradigm. This is followed by a concise yet comprehensive narration of Japan's inclusion in, and subsequent evolution of, the contested practices of 'robustness' and 'integration' in international peacekeeping. The authors elaborate on the existing international peacekeeping framework while analyzing Japan's responses to these developments.

Chapter 2 chronicles Japan's post-World War II anti-militarist policy, tracing the contested creation of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) in 1954, which originated from the Police Reserve Force to the establishment of the PKO Act in 1992. The narrative highlights Japan's limited role during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, which was restricted to financial contributions. This response provoked dissatisfaction in the United States. It led to a sense of inadequacy within the Japanese government, particularly when Japan's economy was performing exceptionally well, and the nation aspired to be recognized as a global power. This perceived underperformance motivated both the government and the public to consider deploying SDF personnel to United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKOs), albeit under strict conditions. Consequently, the first SDF dispatch occurred in Cambodia, followed by missions in East Timor, Haiti, and South Sudan. These missions led to the evolution of the PKO Act through formal amendments in 1998, 2001, and 2015.

The book provides an in-depth account of the unique terminologies crafted by the Japanese government to align the deployment of peacekeepers with local norms and constitutional constraints. These terminologies include distinctions between 'self-defense' and 'self-preservation,' the concept of 'coming-to-aid duty,' and the hypothetical 'five principles' that must be met before deploying SDF personnel to a foreign country. Japan's troop contributions were suspended following the abrupt withdrawal of the Japanese Engineering Group (JEG) from South Sudan after the outbreak of a de facto civil war in 2016. Despite this, Japan has ensured that its withdrawal is not perceived as a defiance of international peace cooperation. Instead, Japan has assumed the role of a capacity-builder by providing advanced training to peacekeepers and continuing its financial support to UNPKOs.

In the concluding chapters, the authors suggest that, in alignment with trends observed in the Global North, it is unlikely that Japan will resume SDF deployments to foreign territories in the near future. However, the possibility cannot be entirely ruled out. The authors express optimism that Japan will enhance and accelerate its capacity-building efforts to support UNPKOs.

The structural arrangement of the book is commendable as it progresses systematically towards its central argument. The authors establish a historical context for Japan and the international peacekeeping landscape, followed by a theoretical foundation supported by substantial evidence. A detailed account of four key case studies is then presented, culminating in a conclusion that integrates theoretical insights with empirical evidence and offers a forward-looking perspective. This approach ensures clarity and coherence, even when addressing the complexities of Japan's responses. The language used throughout the text is accessible and concise, carefully avoiding ambiguity. Context-specific terms are thoroughly explained before their usage, contributing to the overall clarity and comprehensibility of the work.

The book contains instances where certain word choices disrupt the momentum of thought, reflecting a casual representation of facts or phenomena. For instance, while discussing public support for the dispatch of minesweepers within the context of Japan's anti-militarist stance, the authors describe this shift as 'surprising.' Similarly, terms such as 'amazingly' are employed elsewhere in the text. However, social phenomena are rarely sudden or surprising; seemingly abrupt changes often have underlying, unidentified causes that merit exploration. Although the authors later provide an adequate explanation for this 'surprising shift,' the immediate use of a more academically appropriate term, such as 'significant, 'remarkable,' or 'unanticipated,' would have better preserved the scholarly tone and avoided unnecessary casualness.

The authors also argue that Japan's discontinuation of troop contributions should be considered part of the broader trend of minimal troop contributions from the Global North. This claim raises two critical issues.
First, the concept of the Global North is inherently abstract and contested, often criticized for its discriminatory undertones toward the developing or underdeveloped world. The authors themselves inadvertently reflect such bias when commenting on troop contributions from the Global South, stating that these are primarily of infantry, albeit not at a quality equivalent to those from the Global North. This statement, while bold, lacks sufficient empirical evidence and risks offending readers due to its generalization and implicit bias.

Second, the argument rests on two assumptions: that Japan should be categorized as part of the Global North and that its contributions to UNPKOs are comparable to those of other Global North states. These assumptions are problematic. Japan's national legal complexities, public reluctance, and opposition to military deployments distinguish its context from that of other Global North nations. These factors also underpin the complete withdrawal of the Japanese Engineering Group (JEG) from South Sudan in 2017, which the authors describe as an 'abrupt termination.' This withdrawal cannot be attributed solely to Global North trends but to deeper, undeclared reasons specific to Japan's domestic context, making the argument look flawed or overly simplistic.

Despite these critiques, the authors provide an extensive and detailed exploration of Japan's uniquely shaped peacekeeping policy, offering readers valuable insights into the complexities of balancing international expectations with domestic constraints. While the book occasionally displays biases toward the Japanese state, it remains accessible and minimizes confusion regarding the intricacies of Japan's approach to military deployment abroad.

The book opens new avenues for research, particularly in analyzing Japanese society to better understand its steadfast anti-militarist stance despite its historical legacy as a powerful empire. Additionally, it raises important questions about the

underlying causes of limited troop contributions to UNPKOs from developed states, avoiding reliance on the contested term 'Global North.'

Overall, this work is a significant contribution to peacekeeping scholarship. It offers fresh perspectives on state behavior in navigating the tensions between international obligations and domestic public opinion, which often diverge.

United Nations Peacekeeping and the Principal of Non-Intervention: A TWAIL Perspective
by *Jennifer Giblin*

*Madeeha Umair Malik[1]

This comprehensive review of *United Nations Peacekeeping and the Principle of Non-Intervention: A TWAIL Perspective* by Jennifer Giblin offers an in-depth examination of the evolution of United Nations peacekeeping operations and their relationship with the principle of non-intervention, viewed through the lens of Third World Approaches to International Law (TWAIL). The author poses a rhetorical question regarding whether the United Nations Peacekeeping Missions (UNPKMs), in their efforts to conduct robust and multifaceted stabilization operations, genuinely adhere to the principle of non-intervention and respect the sovereignty of member states. In scrutinizing contemporary peacekeeping practices, Giblin invites readers to critically assess how these missions often overstep their legitimate mandate, infringing on state sovereignty and blurring the boundaries between peacekeeping and intervention.

The book employs TWAIL as its primary theoretical framework, supplemented by Critical Legal Theory. TWAIL provides a lens to interrogate the relationship between peacekeeping and intervention by exposing the inherent inequalities in international law and the systemic exploitation and oppression of third-world countries, often referred to as the Global South, by dominant Western states. Critical Legal Theory further complements this analysis by exploring how international law is susceptible to manipulation, frequently serving the interests of powerful states at the expense of less privileged nations.

In Chapter 2, the author explores the indiscriminate application of the principle of non-intervention, a concept rooted in the Peace of Westphalia, which marked the conclusion of the Eighty Years' War and established state sovereignty as a foundational tenet of international relations. This principle theoretically prohibited external interference in the internal and external affairs of states. However, European powers, under the guise of the 'White Man's Burden,' circumvented this principle through 'civilizing missions' that legitimized their interventions in non-European states

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during the colonial era. This historical trend, later conceptualized by Antony Anghie as the 'Dynamics of Difference,' rendered non-European nations vulnerable to control and exploitation (Anghie, 2005, as cited in Giblin, 2024, p.17).

The chapter further examines the post-colonial period, during which the decolonization of Africa and Asia led to the emergence of newly independent states. These states achieved sovereign status and became subject to international law, including the principle of non-intervention. However, the author critiques how the United Nations, established to ensure collective security among member states, has facilitated disproportionate interventions, particularly under the 'Responsibility to Protect' (R2P) doctrine. This doctrine emerged in response to failures such as those in Rwanda and Srebrenica, where the international community failed to prevent mass atrocities.

The chapter critically examines the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and its peacekeeping mandates, emphasizing the significant influence exerted by dominant states, particularly the Permanent Five (P5) members, in shaping these mandates. The author contends that the conflation of peace enforcement and state-building efforts, often conducted under coercive pretenses, undermines the sovereignty of the affected states. Rather than resolving conflicts, such interventions frequently perpetuate the issues they aim to address. The chapter concludes by advocating for a more nuanced, context-specific approach to peacekeeping that adheres to international law and respects state sovereignty.

The next chapter, titled *'Peacekeeping—In Search of a Legal Framework,'* explores United Nations peacekeeping operations' evolving legal foundations and limitations. Initially designed as passive and non-discriminatory mechanisms, peacekeeping operations have significantly transformed. These developments stem from applying Chapters VI and VII of the UN Charter, with occasional references to Chapter IV. Chapter VI, concerning the Pacific Settlement of Disputes, emphasizes peaceful resolution mechanisms. However, the UNSC's increasingly frequent invocation of Chapter VII, which addresses 'breaches or threats to peace,' has redefined traditional peacekeeping boundaries, introducing coercive measures to maintain international peace (Giblin, 2024, p.78).

The legal framework of peacekeeping is built upon three core principles: consent, impartiality, and the non-use of force, collectively referred to as the 'Holy Trinity.' These principles delineate peacekeeping from intervention. The principle of consent ensures that host states authorize UN missions, thereby legitimizing their presence. However, in intra-state conflicts, the host state's inconsistent cooperation complicates this principle, often resulting in quasi-coercive roles, particularly in hybrid 'Chapter VII and a half' missions that blend peacekeeping and enforcement.

Another foundational principle, impartiality, prohibits peacekeepers from favoring any party in a conflict. Nevertheless, the author critiques its application in modern political peacekeeping missions, contrasting earlier operations, such as the 1956 United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF), which were perceived as more neutral and objective. Contemporary missions, in contrast, are criticized for their operational demands and alignment with host governments, which compromise their neutrality and exacerbate tensions between peacekeeping mandates and the principle of non-intervention.

The principle of the non-use of force, initially restricting peacekeepers to employing force solely in self-defense, has evolved to include more robust, offensive operations. This shift permits using force to protect civilians and enforce mission

mandates. However, this development has drawn criticism for its potential to breach the principle of non-intervention, as such actions may be perceived as coercive interventions in the host state's affairs.

Chapters 5 and 6 of the book critically evaluate the practical application of the legal principles of consent, impartiality, and the non-use of force alongside the normative frameworks of the Protection of Civilians (PoC), democracy promotion, and the prohibition of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) in UN peacekeeping missions deployed in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The author provides an in-depth analysis of the evolving nature of these legal principles and normative frameworks in the context of three peacekeeping operations in the DRC: the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC) in 1960, the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) in 1999, and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in 2010. The discussion highlights the significant transformation of peacekeeping operations over time. Beginning with ONUC, a traditional, observational mission, the evolution is marked by using unprecedented levels of force in both strategy and tactics in MONUC and MONUSCO. Although these later missions were designed to support state-building, ensure civilian protection, and maintain security, they increasingly relied on coercive measures to implement changes within the host state.

The author argues that these expanded mandates often reinterpret or extend the legal principles—particularly impartiality and the non-use of force—resulting in actions that challenge the boundaries of peacekeeping and the principle of non-intervention. The host state's consent, granted before the deployment of these missions, is identified as the sole factor preventing these operations from fully breaching the principle of non-intervention. Once consent is secured, the missions can continually evolve and expand in the field, effectively transforming into what the author terms 'Hybrid Peacekeeping Interventions' or 'Interventions by Invitation.' The author states, "These missions can continually expand and evolve once in the field, without violating the principle of non-intervention, because of this initial consent" (Giblin, 2024, p. 206).

In the final chapter, the author proposes adopting more realistic and streamlined mandates and a people-centric approach to peacekeeping to address the challenges encountered in contemporary peacekeeping operations. This recommendation emphasizes the importance of aligning peacekeeping practices with the evolving needs of host states while ensuring adherence to international law and the preservation of state sovereignty. This book provides a comprehensive examination of the evolution of UN Peacekeeping, employing the TWAIL framework to critique the Western-centric narrative. It offers a critical analysis of the entrenched power dynamics that shape peacekeeping missions, highlighting how these missions often serve the interests of dominant states by legitimizing interventions in weaker states. However, while the book provides an insightful critique, TWAIL exhibits inherent biases that cannot be overlooked. In its focus on challenging power imbalances in international law, TWAIL sometimes overlooks the positive impacts and the necessity of intervention in certain circumstances, as well as the genuine humanitarian efforts made in host states.

The DRC, with one of the longest-standing peacekeeping missions, not only grounds the author's argument in real-world examples but also vividly illustrates the evolution of peacekeeping operations. The transition from a traditional, passive peacekeeping approach in early missions to a more interventionist stance in later

missions is effectively depicted. However, the generalizability of the book's findings regarding the relationship between peacekeeping and intervention may be questioned, as they rely heavily on a single case study and may not apply to other contexts with differing factors. Despite these limitations, the book provides significant insights into the formation and evolution of the Principle of Non-Intervention and UN Peacekeeping. It highlights the ongoing dilemma the UN faces in balancing the respect for host states' sovereignty with the need to prioritize international stability and the challenges this balance poses to the Principle of Non-Intervention.

# How Peace Operations Work: Power, Legitimacy, and Effectiveness
by *Jeni Whalan*

*Umair Ameen[1]

This book provides an in-depth view of peace operations regarding their power, legitimacy, and effectiveness. The author builds upon her thesis that peace operations achieve their objectives by influencing the behavior of local actors. The book begins by addressing the moral debate surrounding power and legitimacy, reflecting on their interplay and raising pertinent questions. The author reflects on the subject by offering a multitude of academic debates on the dogma of international interventions, particularly in the context of rising casualties and the ethical dilemmas posed by such actions. The instrument to facilitate peace implementation as propounded by Michel Aoyle and Nicolas Sambanishe's paradox of sovereignty is thoughtfully explored, referencing Dominik Zaum's discussions on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and Robert Jackson's contributions to understanding international engagement in wartime contexts by the author.

The book also contains substantial views on the norms and politics of international state-building, including a review of Roland Paris' '*At War's End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict*' and how sustainable dispute management can prevent violent conflicts. Brahimi's report is aptly referenced as a cornerstone in the 'peace triangle' as shown in the figure below, offering a comprehensive framework for understanding the dynamics of peace operations.

Figure 1. Peace Triangle
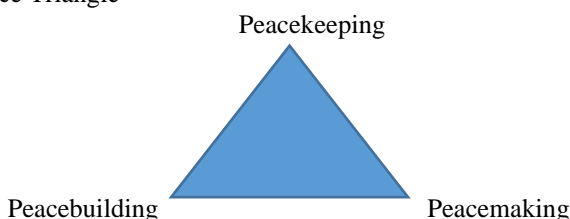
Source: Galtung's Triangle of Conflict, Violence and Peace

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The book effectively examines peace operations through the lens of complex deployments, portraying them as 'agents of change.' It focuses on critical awareness of power dynamics, particularly the 'compulsory' power of peace operations. As the discussion flows through the benchmarks of realist and neo-liberal based approaches, the time-honored anxiety of concession is considered the currency of reward, i.e., cash for guns (disarmament incentives). A significant section deals with the riddle of authority overlaps because the power of legitimacy entails moral reasoning. One chapter offers an in-depth exploration of legitimacy and its implications for peace operations. It has identified gaps in peace operations literature and why people comply with the authorities. The narration of 'Lex & Rex,' Latin for the law is king, the right to rule, or rightness of rule, is well articulated.

Some of the book's significant highlights include its clear definition of peace operations, its goals and mandates. It emphasizes the importance of social psychology in the context of peace operations, shedding light on how human behavior influences their effectiveness. The book also explores the paradox between local and international aspects of peacekeeping, examining the tensions and synergies that arise. Additionally, it identifies four critical factors essential to successful peace operations: participation, consultation, accountability, and neutrality.

Moreover, the book examines the causes behind the failure of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) to achieve key objectives such as cease-fire, disarmament, and mobilization. The chapter on UNTAC is well-researched, offering a detailed analysis of its weaknesses and limited successes. It provides insights into how treaties and agreements were undermined, how UNTAC initially became a 'toothless' entity, and how it eventually turned the tide through the dynamic leadership and strategic wisdom of international players. Furthermore, the author applies the newly developed power-legitimacy framework to analyze both UNTAC and the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), offering a fresh perspective on their operations and outcomes.

In conclusion, the book explores the practical implications of this new approach, presenting a set of policy reforms to enhance the effectiveness of peace operations. By focusing on the interplay of power, legitimacy, and effectiveness, the author provides valuable insights into how peace operations can be strengthened.

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