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Intervention Brigades in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Challenges Posed to International Humanitarian Law

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Abstract

In recent decades, the United Nations (UN) has directed its peacekeeping operations to be practice-driven. This has led to an alternative approach to state-military contacts, such as those provided by the United States and other nations; the UN is more inclined to consolidate and strengthen its liaisons through Intervention Brigades. The efficacy of these brigades lies in providing military assistance to UN operations and catering to logistics, training, and advice. Advocates of peace, the UN peacekeeping operations (UNPKOs) are based on consent, impartiality, and non-utilization of force (excluding times of civilian protection and self-defense). However, as Intervention Brigades gain momentum, 'robust' peacekeeping is becoming more regulated; thus, promoting 'force' against rebel groups and/or militias. When aligned with robust Intervention Brigades, which utilizes more force than lawfully permitted, UN peacekeeping (UNPK) missions question these operations' credibility, thus blurring the conceptual difference between peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Conspicuously, this exploits the traditional principle of impartiality using hard power and violates the International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Exemplifying through the case study of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), this paper aims to discuss the abovementioned discrepancy resulting in complications for the discipline of Peace and Conflict Studies (PCS). As the discipline promotes achieving peace through 'soft' means, the paper reviews the subject under Chapter VI & VII of the UN charter and highlights the grey areas of IHL applicability in UN peacekeeping and Intervention Brigades.

Keywords

Introduction

The United Nations Peacekeeping Forces (UNPKF/UNPK) were established after creating the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) in the aftermath of the November 1956 Suez Canal crisis. It is indispensable and is deemed necessary to

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keep in mind the modernity of this phenomenon inculcated in the realms of international relations discipline. This has also played a critical role as the moderator of the newly found discipline of PCS and conflict resolutions. The term 'peacekeeping' is formally defined as "Field operations established by the UN, with the consent of the parties concerned, to help control and resolve conflicts between them, under UN command and control, at the expense collectively of the member states, and with military and other personnel and equipment provided voluntarily by them, acting impartially between the parties and using force to the minimum extent necessary" (Goulding, 1993, p. 455). The core concept behind the creation of peacekeeping missions is to find or create an applicable idea as visualized in Chapter VII of the UN Charter (which reports on the threats to and breaches of peace). Following the Charter, the UNPK mandate primarily sets upon three traditional doctrines: non-use of force (except in self-defense and civilian protection), impartiality, and consent of the involved parties.

Recognized in 1958 by the then UN Secretary-General, Hammarskjold, the global dynamics fundamentally altered the premise of UN peacekeeping. This shift was observed in several operations after the Cold War, particularly during the Opération des Nations Unies au Congo (ONUC), 1960-64 (Kaya, 2015). As formerly mentioned, UNPK was *created* as an amalgamated solution to many issues; it was a gradual process that evolved over an extended period of time, bringing about additional and minor changes. Over time, this process has come to be termed as path-dependence (Hatto, 2013). The concept is relatively familiar to public policy, which identifies it as a process by which a policy or a practice becomes entrenched and very hard to modify as stated, "more obstacles existed in the peacekeeping process in the post-cold war phase when compared with the cold war period" (Mishra, 2013, p. 112). The steady and continual process of changes in UN peacekeeping's mandate and its increasing multi-functionality with the formally instituted Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO, established in 1992) portrayed the escalating importance of peacekeeping operations and functions. With these expansions and modifications, the violations of human rights and vast multiple failures of UN peacekeeping missions bore the idea of robust peacekeeping and the introduction of the role of Intervention Brigades which, over the years, have played a significant role in UN's mediation in the cases of the former Yugoslavia (1991), Iraq (1991), and the DRC (1960) to name a few.

The Brahimi Report, formally known as the Panel Report on United Nations Peace Operations, identifies the rationale based on which UNPKO are acknowledged to become more robust (Durch, Holt, Earle, & Shanahan, 2003). The push for robustness initially is considered to have come from Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which appropriately allows the use of all necessary means. This has become a *legal* narrative behind the established idea of using force as a *tactical* initiative to broaden the multidimensional aspect of catering to the peacekeeping operation. However, the dialogue of using force and Intervention Brigades in UNPKO has proved to be another challenge. It has initiated multiple debates on congenital contradictions, much like those of the questionable legal implications of IHL in UNPKO (Tull, 2018).

However so, the concurrent approval of robust actions has been acknowledged solely under the UNPK's guarantee of obligating with its three basic traditional principles as mentioned previously, i.e. consent, impartiality, and minimal use of force (De Coning, Aoi, & Karlsud, 2017). Nonetheless, it is appreciative of the transparent observations that mention the increasing gap between UNPK's principles

and its evolution of operations, which indicate an inclination towards the use of force, and introduction to the Intervention Brigade. UNPKOs have notably addressed this point; the Capstone Doctrine states that in essence, impartiality is not to be confused as *neutrality* and therefore should allow robust force in operation mandates (Hunt, 2017). Nevertheless, as a point to be made, this galvanized statement does not further acknowledge the in-field complications. The UN mission to DRC is a comprehensive example, as there were many encounters where the UNPK failed to utilize the positive outcome of its Intervention Brigade to protect civilians (Tull, 2018).

As observed in the previous few decades, the ongoing advancements and modifications of UNPKOs have inevitably called for the reinterpretations of IHL's legal mechanisms and its applicability on UN peacekeepers (Swinarksi, 1997). Despite this, it is an understood fact that peacekeeping forces can, under certain circumstances, become a part of an armed conflict. The UN initially dismissed itself from recognizing it until the Intervention Brigade operation in DRC. United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) officially released its statement of creating an *offensive* combat force, for the first time, in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) through Resolution 2098 in March 2013 (UN Security Council, 2013).

However, the contemporary enhancements of peacekeeping operations and their functions have highlighted the ongoing struggle. Majority of the present literature has been focused on enlightening the readers; mapping out the history and the formulation of UNPK and presenting the concept of *peace enforcement*. However, little emphasis has been given to the legal aspect and its implications. The reason behind this may be that only a few countable cases truly refer to the newly introduced generation of *peace enforcement* explicitly done using Intervention Brigade. Through the experience of DRC, it is learnt that the legal impacts of the use of force and the introduction of Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) are somewhat overlooked in the currently produced literature, and a comprehensive analysis is yet to appear, which may clarify further disadvantages (Swinarksi, 1997).

The present article attempts to underline the legal complications in the contemporary UNPKOs, which represent the shift from traditional peacekeeping to peace enforcement in terms of adopting robust actions with the Intervention Brigade's acquisition. In doing so, it first discusses the legal basis and applicability of IHL in UNPK. The article then presents the case study of DRC in light of the Intervention Brigade. A collective understanding of IHL modules then follows the discussion; compared to the ambiguity of robust peacekeeping and the concept of legal impartiality in UNPKOs. Finally, the resulting impact on the discipline of PCS is highlighted.

Understanding the Legal Basis and Application of IHL

November 1951 marked the announcement of a memorandum displayed by the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) calling on UN Secretary-General's attention for warranting the application of the Geneva Convention on the UNPKOs. This was further emphasized during the Vienna 1965 ICRC conference stating that "[…] appropriate arrangements be made to ensure that armed forces placed at the disposal of the UN observe the provisions of the authorities responsible for the Geneva conventions and be protected by them […] and that the authorities responsible for the contingents agree to take all necessary measures to prevent and suppress any breaches of the convention" (International Committee of the Red Cross,

1965, p. 587). In addition, concerning IHL, we need to consider *Article 89* present in the 1977 Additional Protocol 1 of the Geneva Convention (Henckaerts, 2012).

As historically witnessed, UNPK tasks have been limited to maintain peace or simply observe peace in conflict scenarios. However, recent years have seen a gradual transition to peace enforcement, as illustrated in 1992 in Somalia's case. The differentiation between the two is particularly obvious; the former suggests missions without the direct involvement of arms, and the latter suggests UNPKOs which are more warlike. However, according to the UN Charter, UN peacekeepers are not supposed to be involved in combat. Nonetheless, it is understood that UNPK can inevitably be part of armed conflict, and therefore the adherence of IHL's obligations in terms of protection and action comes under all UN organs[2].

After many years of conflict in DRC and the issuance of numerous arrest warrants (such as the multiple convictions and acquittals), in April 2005, International Criminal Court (ICC) was involved which further led to creating a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the ICC and UNPKOs displaced in Congo (MONUSCO). The MoU signed between the two stakeholders showed the cooperative will of MONUSCO to critically consider the security situation while also confirming the ICC that in carrying out its requests, it would be "prepared, in principle and consistently with its mandate, to give consideration, on a case by case basis" (cited from Melillo, 2013).

Formally, the creation of MONUSCO was not in pursuit of the rectification of justice required in this operation. However, the multiple convictions and arrest warrants acknowledged that the situation at hand required the UN peacekeepers to follow their mandate of using *all necessary means* to attain the target. This was agreed upon in the MoU. As a result, the requirement of use of robust force — through Intervention Brigade — was established. This point, too, was identified in the MoU signed between the two parties; empathizing again on their core mandate that the ultimate aim of the use of force is to influence and deter spoilers working against the peace process or seeking to harm civilians, and not to seek their military defeat (Hamilton, 2016).

It is needless to repeat that the UNPK task force has adopted more of a robust mandate (See 'Capstone Doctrine': De Coning, Detzel, & Hojem, 2008). In the 2015 high-level Independent Panel on UNPKOs (Hippo Report), some suggestions were made to reconsider these principles since these were labeled as being outmoded and required adjustments (Smith, 2016).

The Capstone Doctrine emphasizes that the UN Peacekeepers must have a clear understanding of the principles and rules of the IHL and observes them in situations where they are applicable (De Coning, Detzel, & Hojem, 2008). Nonetheless, it is accepted by the state members that it may be challenging to recognize whether on-ground realities have reached a state where IHL is to be applied. This is aligned with a further acknowledgment that the UN peacekeeping may also become a part of the armed conflict due to the impartiality clause (Lachenmann & Wolfrum, 2016).

The abovementioned point further emphasizes the pivotal fact that, to date, there exists no human rights treaty which explicitly underscores the amalgamation of human rights law into UNPKOs. Nonetheless, international human rights law is an

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[2] For details regarding Ad Hoc Committee established by General Assembly Resolution *51/210* of 17 December 1996, please visit https://legal.un.org/committees/terrorism/

integral part of the UNPKOs' normative framework, as stated by the Capstone decree (De Coning, Detzel & Hojem, 2008). However, this does identify another contradiction; the UNPK's collaboration of humanitarian laws with military mandates translates into much confusion for 'peacekeeping' and 'peace enforcement' tasks and operational procedures. Nonetheless, it is the due diligence of IHL which constitutes as an organic element in the UNPK mandate.

To hold the UN responsible for breaching IHL, which is a primary obligation (via Intervention Brigades), it is necessary to scrutinize the foundational ground to examine if the UN holds the ability to withstand the responsibilities on an international platform of such a magnitude. At this point, the UN would require itself to be accepted and recognized as an independent, international, and impartial legal body with precise rules and regulations and specified missions to follow and accomplish — the entirety of which would be bound by IHL. It would be adequately appropriate to state that this distinct UN organization would be independent of its member nations. For the body, it is also mandated to follow established constitutive treaties, international agreements as well as customs. However, the UN is also permitted to deploy armed personnel when required, which is distinct from the IHL body. Indisputably, when the UN does breach any of the binding duties, the international responsibility will be prompted to fulfill the reimbursements for any casualties.

The Case of DRC and Intervention Brigades

From being authorized in March 2013, the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB), in DRC, has launched the so-called robust peacekeeping operations which present a sweeping, crucial change in the execution of UN peace missions mentioned in Chapter VII of UN charter. A thoroughly detailed and comprehensive report on the military operations launched against insurgent groups under the UN banner has still not been commissioned. However, the FIB activities against militias in eastern Congo, which are frequently referenced upon, offer a pivotal example that the UN may move past robust peacekeeping. Therefore, it collectively emphasizes the importance of understanding the significant underlying challenges and insightful advantages of FIB, managed under the UN, and building momentum towards peace enforcement. Nevertheless, it should be taken into account that the allowance of utilizing armed forces by the UNSC has not reached its threshold value (Tull, 2018).

Since 1996, DRC has been inundated in violence and instability; yet, the situation intensified in May 2012 when another forceful renegade group established itself in North Kivu. M23 (March 23rd Movement) emerged largely as a response to the ineffective and incapable endeavors previously exercised to tackle the political, economic, and security interests of officers and commercial stakeholders. Since 1999, MONUC (renamed in 2010 as UNO Stabilization Mission in the DRC/MONUSCO) has significantly complemented the general peace process. However, as of 2015, MONUSCO has seen its authorization and armed military command increase — to become the largest UNPKO globally (Whittle, 2014).

Following the military offensive to put down M23, the FIB's peace enforcement enfeebled the Congolese government's efforts to build sustainable institutions and maintain stability. The offensive also resulted in further marginalizing MONUSCO instead of improving the region's situation, and thus, the government ended its ties with the mission (Nkusi, 2013). Altogether, these many factors further impaired the possibility of sustained stabilization in eastern Congo.

However, the military might of MONUSCO may be seen as a result of the inability of both the Congolese army and government to suppress the M23 advance, which led to the November 2012 disaster. Although MONUSCO engaged in military combat, the M23 was able to occupy Goma, North Kivu's capital (Tull, 2018); thus, leaving MONUSCO's authoritative credibility in jeopardy. The UNSC then commissioned the military strengthening of the MONUSCO with the addition of a 3,096-member Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) by adopting Resolution 2098 and deploying it to eastern Congo (Labbé & Boutellis, 2013). Following the plan to increase armed personnel, UNSC also required the M23 to withdraw from Goma, which was accomplished within a month. At this stage, the FIB was authorized to "carry out targeted offensive operations" against militias "in a robust, highly mobile and versatile manner" (Koko, 2013, p. 73).

Although it is well-established that the FIB was created under the banner of managing and suppressing the insurgent invasion of Goma, all subsequent FIB operations have significantly lacked the characteristic robustness and resoluteness of the Goma operation, which deployed the use of ground forces as well as air attack by helicopters and artillery. The unilateral offensive against the M23 was a success, yet it could not exculpate and substantiate the progressive expansion and development of the enforcement brigade mandate (Tull, 2018).

The political influence and the interests from multiple directions, including international and sub-regional stakeholders, diminished after the collapse of M23; thus, emphasizing the necessity to unravel the political dynamics of the FIB. Therefore, this set the premise that the FIB was not planned as solely an intervention force to eliminate armed militias and reintroduce sustainable security and stability to the civilians and state authority; instead, it was a multi-stakeholder concoction of political strength (Tull, 2018). Acknowledging this information seemed to have provided the UN with an opportunity to invigorate the jeopardized credibility of the MONUSCO and counterbalance the want for strengthening military capacities within the realm of politics (Brosig & Sempijja, 2018).

Conclusively, it can be stated that the resultant statement from the MONUSCO and FIB experiences dictate that militarized peacekeeping missions by the UN fall massively short of achieving their target and strategic objectives. On the contrary, they effectively bring about further militarization by the host government instead of inclusive politics and/or actively investing in improving state-society relations and building peace, growth, development, and educational institutions.

All military interventions have substantial political consequences and inevitable involvement, which transform the relations between the power-holders on both sides of the conflict and the pivotal local bodies. Unfortunately, none of this takes into account the lack of preparation, thus resulting in unforeseen repercussions.

To a certain degree, it is relatively safe to conclude that the FIB may act as an anticipator of what might be on the horizon. Significant higher authorities may consider FIB to be a "milestone that signaled the resolve of the UNSC to address the changing nature of conflict and the operating environment of United Nations peacekeeping"[3] as it is in-line with the credible effectiveness of UNPK troops

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[3] Secretary-General's remarks at Security Council Open Debate on Trends in UN Peacekeeping (June 11, 2014): https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2014-06-11/secretary-generals-remarks-security-council-open-debate-trends

deployed. FIB is also contemplated as a substantive qualitative change and an example of an accomplishment that may exhibit echoic properties elsewhere (Hultman, Kathman, & Shannon, 2019). In any case, the prominent and consequential point is the peacekeeping interventions, as planned and comprehended for DRC, foundationally believed that armed groups are the only challenge and the collective state is the only solution (e.g., Rudolf, 2017).

It is worth paying attention to the summation that the FIB's own intervening in the working of MONUSCO expedited the latter's marginalization. The swift and decisive success of the FIB against the M23 further cemented the belief across Congo that MONUSCO and the Congolese government had exceptionally failed to do their job. The public support of MONUSCO diminished, and the government used the M23's defeat to serve its deep-rooted and persistent opposition against the UN mission (Tull, 2013). Nevertheless, regardless of the opposition, the grounding point here is that precedence has been placed which now brings military-based operations as the frontline solution for sustaining peace in DRC. MONUSCO's failure and the need to deploy military assistance and maintain a progressive enlargement of armed personnel further cemented the ideology that 'stabilization' and 'security' are in conjunction (De Vries, 2016). This developed into strong support for a government's decree that leaned more towards dictatorial authoritativeness rather than establishing efficient and long-standing reform management bodies.

Robustness and IHL

Repeatedly, the impediment that comes in between the applicability of IHL is due to the vagueness identified in the concept of robust peacekeeping operations or, in other words, the use of *force*. The Resolution *1565* MONUSCO, mentions, "to use all necessary means, within its capacity and in the areas where its armed units are deployed" (UN Security Council, 2004, p. 3). This leaves a vast area open to multiple interpretations, allowing the UN peacekeepers to act according to what they think is right. Concerning DRC, this meant that the state army's joint military operation has to *disarm* foreign troops. The lack of an extensive explanation required in this statement gives unprecedented margin to questionable actions and disrespect to the accountability at the hand of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) under IHL.

The attempt to justify the impact of these ambiguities left in UNPK's mandate regarding DRC has led to one of the most robust operations to date in the Ituri district (Kreps, 2010). The attack led by UNPK on armed groups developed into a warlike situation that resulted in high casualties. In regards to this event, the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operation (DPKO) and the then force commander Babacar Gaye remarked that "it may look like war, but it's peacekeeping" (Lacey, 2005, para. 15). The obscurity of the idea of robust operations is widely accepted and acknowledged in the UN report by stating that there is a high level of blurring between the lines of conducting war and pursuing peace. This, again, is a reminder that the lack of elucidations of UN mandates and the regulations of IHL prevent the right action from being taken and allow multiple activities to slip through the loopholes of the law, going unnoticed and creating a situation of critical vulnerability to all those present in the conflict.

The MONUSCO operation could not live up to the expectations of UNPK's evolving mandate. The idea of moving from traditional peacekeeping to the newly introduced Intervention Brigade in the light of robust peace operation was a failure due to the lack of extensive specification, and the particularity of the UN mandate and

regulations assigned by both IHL and the UN Charter. The inability of UNPKO in Congo to adhere to the core concept of *robust* peacekeeping, specifically in addressing the Protection of Civilians (PoC), highlighted the newly introduced mandate's weaknesses. This further signified another problem in the peacekeeping mandate, i.e., the repetitive mentions of the *use of force* in times of self-defense, which has been a long-standing cornerstone. Thus, this once again makes one realize that the shortcomings of Intervention Brigades' use were more or less based on the problems impeded in the mandate's conceptual framework.

The ambiguities in the statements of the mandate and IHL largely suggest that the modern outlook towards new-age peacekeeping would first require a proper, clear, and distinct guidance underlined and represented through multiple scenarios, taking into consideration of all possible outcomes that peacekeeping forces may face on-ground. It is unwise to say that any *amount* or *extent* of robust action permissibility has been left for on-field missions to discover. Considering the history of the ambiguous mandates given to the past Intervention Brigades, peace enforcing operations and their resulting outcomes have proven that this clarity in meaning is a requirement of not only UN officials but also all other parties involved, i.e., UNSC, state members, troop-contributing countries, and specifically the DPKO. Any further Intervention Brigades need to be based on explicit rules of engagement (Tull, 2009).

Concept of Impartial Force Concerning IHL

The initial purpose behind introducing the Intervention Brigades in the DRC by the UNSC was to dismantle non-state armed groups present at the time. With the introduction of FIB, one of the fundamental bases of the UNPK mandate — impartiality (Seversted, 1961) — came under the critical light of many as it was seemingly opposing the rules of IHL and the mandate itself. The modernity of UNPKOs gave gratuitous and unwarranted rise to new definitions given to peacebuilding. The transition from peacekeeping to peace enforcement made 'intrusion' a *justifiable* action in the UNPKOs. Many critics point out that these newly enforced activities upheld by the Intervention Brigades were, in fact, subsequently downplaying and violating the basic norms of peacekeeping, i.e. impartiality, as seen in the case of DRC. For instance, Laurence (2019) provides a comprehensive commentary on the 'novelty' and 'impartiality' of the abovementioned endorsed peacekeeping activities.

An example of impartiality would be the delayed use of robust force exercised by troops in combat on the grounds of morality and legitimacy and because of the risk of vulnerability about the political and systematic outcomes of employing such power. Thus, they would circumvent the aggravating risks to their battalions because using robust force against militias increases the probability of intensified retaliations against the PKO personnel; as a result, can be considered 'inherently' ideologically impartial. As seen over decades, an amalgamation of such factors exhibits that peacekeeping missions have repeatedly neglected the safeguarding of the civilians in DRC.

The above example suggests that the tactics enforced for PKOs are subconsciously a form of maintaining ontological security. The result of multiple interpretations of IHL by all stakeholders of the UNSC and member states places on-ground peacekeepers in a quagmire. The reasoning as to why the role of impartiality was formally inculcated in the basic principles of the Intervention Brigades mandate could, possibly, be a way to cover political disagreements (Mitzen, 2006). This

further allowed them to evade accountability through the loopholes of the infinite interpretations of IHL while further proceeding to justify the activities and actions as legitimate and fair in the court of ICJ; thus moving away from the process of disputing or arguing.

During the 1950s, the UN Emergency Force embarked upon the UN operations' essential tasks that mainly targeted expedites disputes by utilizing peaceful resolutions. The deployed peacekeepers were instructed to respect the hosting state's sovereignty and refrain from being involved in any domestic issues. The UNPKOs were free from any global political, economic, and sociological ideologies. Under the basis of this platform, the concept of impartiality took birth and made its roots as a fundamental principle in the context of peacekeeping mandates, thus resulting in a long-standing association of fairness in conflict resolutions (Koh, 1996). Thomas Franck (1968), in 'Structure of Impartiality: Toward the Organisation of World Law', explains that impartiality has a long association with fairness in conflict resolution.

However, modern-day peace operations exist in an entirely different normative context. The new arena of robust peacekeeping has made way for disagreements in all member states' relative consensus. As concisely stated by a diplomat based in New York, "we don't all agree as to what peacekeeping should mean" (Laurence, 2019, p. 262).

Increasing knowledge and awareness of IHL and its abiding norms have put a significant amount of pressure on expectations regarding how the UN peace operations should behave. For instance, the Capstone Doctrine refers to human rights and IHL as a central feature of regulating host nations' structure; nevertheless, it also expresses that peace operations should acknowledge and show deference to the host nation's sovereignty (Thakur et al., 2001). Unfortunately, these prerequisites are not always well-matched with the objectives of the peace mission. It has been stated that such peacekeeping operations carry uncertainty from political standpoints of not just the involved member states but also the host government. This level of vagueness and uncertainty entails mismatched objectives, especially when it comes to safeguarding civilians; this is also because the nations involved conceptualize legitimacy differently (Laurence 2019); thus, resulting in the ineffective balancing of UN's logistic commitments and the peacekeeping mission objectives.

On the other hand, it comes as no surprise that recent legal studies and academicians blame the new *peace enforcement* ideology behind *robust military actions* to depreciate impartiality in the contemporary UN operations (McGreal, 2015). The Intervention Brigades offensive mandate creates hurdles to claim impartiality (Lamot & Skeppström, 2013). Regardless of this, the UNPK mission parties represent the use of force by the Intervention Brigades as an ultimately impartial activity. Laurence (2019) has stated that the act of robust use of force is impartial because it "implements its mandate in an unbiased manner" (p.272). Here again, it can be seen that these multiple interpretations and assigned meanings to each mandate create complications during on-field application of humanitarian laws, especially during robust operations.

Releasing a statement that announces Intervention Brigades as impartial would seem confusing for the readers, as it does not carry the same meaning amongst the UN state members or the Council. Efforts on eliminating militarization of peace mission, by using robust Intervention Brigade, have begun by some UN officials (under High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations) who disapprove of such

mandates. However, it is also acknowledged that "not all the mandates are actually impartial [and the FIB] is not impartial" (Laurence, 2019, p. 272). In other words, conformity to the UN peacekeeping mandate still does not assure a mission being impartial. In contrary, General Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz, MONUSCO Force Commander, argues that UN operations now function outside the leading peacekeeping values (Dos Santos Cruz, Phillips & Cusimano, 2017). Upon further investigation into his opinion on UNPK missions, it was submitted that even though the robust peacekeeping module is officially based on impartiality, it was indeed complicated to say whether Intervention Brigades are truly impartial or not (Holmes, 2019).

Impact of Ambiguity of IHL and the UN Charter Mandates on PCS

The misinterpretation and ambiguity of the IHL modules, which are the backbone of UNPKOs, bring multiple queries to mind, much like a deliberate agreement on the very notion of peace missions. The term itself is under scrutiny as nations argue if this terminology explicitly entails the multidimensional tasks of these peace operations, from robust use of force to developing sustainable peace institutes without risking humanitarian crises. It can be deliberated upon that, due to these complications, the UNPK today needs to implement a more accurate implementation of IHL in their mandate to make their operations more human-centric, as the research of PCS discipline aims to achieve (Månsson, 2006).

It is essential to understand that peacekeeping alone cannot instill solutions to contemporary problems with the ever-increasing complexities of today's world order. It is vital to broadening our scope in understanding and signifying the accuracy of humanitarian laws needed to prevent mass destruction. The introduction of contemporary peace enforcement should be in accordance with the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Convention, keeping in mind the loopholes they may create (Breakey & Dekker, 2014).

The interplay of the expeditious changes in the post-war world order, globalization, global interdependence, and the mere understanding of IHL has seen differences in perspective and contradictions in its basic definition. The new issues around the world such as human migration, pandemics, climate change, and wildfires — the non-traditional threats to states and non-state actors — have developed a new definition and rather a proper interpretation of IHL, which was previously considered and addressed to as something which solely involved arms and disarmament, nuclear proliferation, and mainly war-affected people.

Thus, despite being human-centric in nature, the challenge is that the concept of unclear interpretation of IHL creates a challenge for PCS. The problem presented with IHL applicability is that it has allowed multiple interpretations; even the one stated by the UN is considered abstruse. Due to multiple definitions, there is a lack of one universally accepted understanding, interpretation, and application of IHL. This leads to plural epistemologies and the inability of correct/singular rule of engagement during operations. IHL is considered a tool for policymaking and judgment, yet this point cannot conform globally as different societies have different associated interpretations. This leads to knowing that there is no defined threshold of a body of law under which it could be identified. If actions and activities are in accordance with the agenda of this whole notion of PCS research and literature, it would ultimately question this particular discipline's credibility. The lack of authenticity in definition and proper availability of a framework or a procedure to follow the process of IHL

creates obscurities and difficulties in implementing much-needed actions. Consequently, this poses a challenge for the execution of conflict resolution and peacekeeping perspective in the discipline.

In conclusion, the above-stated points bring further concerns into consideration; the inability of correct interpretation of humanitarian laws and their applications — that consists of a realist perspective. After the Cold War, without any qualms, the world was ready to think differently in prospects of a new collective global order, moving from using hard power to soft power, from wars to resolutions. Nevertheless, the inability to adopt correct means and usefulness of humanitarian laws has led the global community back to the previous order, except adopting a new name (such as from peacekeeping to peace enforcement) or even introducing *robustness*, leaving grounds for multiple interpretations. This can be effectively seen in how UN peacekeeping's mandate has more or less distorted the distinction between the two concepts of 'peacekeeping' and 'peace enforcement'; Intervention Brigades fall directly under the latter category (Månsson, 2005). Ultimately, the legitimacy of IHL lies in the power of the policies produced through the research of PCS and vice versa. PCS stands on the pillar of IHL; the credibility of the research produced by this discipline would not be valid without the authentication provided by the laws. Keeping the peacekeeping mandate from getting blurry and in coherence with IHL is one way of keeping these operations viable for the future. This would include investment in peacebuilding strategies that undertake to strengthen the rule of law intuitions and human right experts in conflict-stricken environments.

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Evolving Trends in Peacekeeping: United Nations–African Union Hybrid Peacekeeping Operations (UNAMID) in Darfur

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Abstract

Peacekeeping has become a far more complex and multifaceted phenomenon due to the emerging non-traditional security threats and the changing nature of intrastate conflicts. This paper focuses on the evolving trends in peacekeeping operations and illuminates the transition from 'traditional' to a 'robust' and 'hybrid' peacekeeping model. In doing so, the paper presents the hybrid United Nations and African Union (UN-AU) peacekeeping model as a pilot project in Darfur. It further highlights the extent to which the model proved to be effective and inclusive, and secured financial and troop-contributing obligations jointly by the UN and AU. Furthermore, understanding the dialectics of 'traditional' and 'hybrid' peacekeeping operations has been analyzed through positive peace. Overall, the article highlights the essential contours of United Nations–African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) transition from AMIS and inquires its contribution towards peacebuilding and developing the state institution, thus ensuring sustainable peace and stability.

Keywords
Darfur, traditional peacekeeping, AMIS, UNAID, hybrid peacekeeping, non-traditional security

Introduction
The United Nations (UN) was founded on the basic premise of saving future generations from the scourge of wars and conflicts, protecting fundamental human rights, ensuring equality for all, and promoting social development for better life standards (United Nations, 2015). The journey of human history in the last 70 years, after the inception of the United Nations, was quite turbulent; while no conflict to the scale of World War II resurfaced, yet the world has consistently witnessed human miseries in the form of interstate and intrastate conflicts. The most significant demonstration of the UN efforts for maintaining peace and stability is the 'peace support missions' around the globe to secure international peace. Through peaceful

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means, such efforts are necessarily in conformance with the principles of justice, International Humanitarian Law (IHL), and settlement of international disputes damaging peace prospects (e.g., Malan, 1998; Peck, 1998). The nature of contemporary peace operations has evolved over seventy years of experience, which has been accustomed to developing situations in the conflict-affected regions. Significant changes in the post-Cold War international security environment continue to pose challenges and, therefore, demand collaborative efforts as peacekeeping has become more complex and multidimensional. Hence, modern peacekeeping has transformed itself into a far more comprehensive arrangement for managing and building state institutions in political and socio-economic domains, often under unpredictable circumstances. This is due to the mere fact that most of the current peacekeeping missions are necessitated by intra-state, rather than inter-state, conflicts (Coning et al., 2010); a re-positioning from merely acting as a buffer between the two warring parties after their consent.

Peacekeeping, the most demanding undertaking of the United Nations, helps the conflict-prone and affected countries in creating conditions for sustainable peace. The UN peacekeepers (including the military, police, and civilian components from the international community), monitor, observe, and implement the peace agreement signed by the warring parties. Such assistance comes in many forms, including promoting confidence-building measures, human security, electoral support, power-sharing formula, and economic and social development, to name a few (Fukuda-Parr & Messineo, 2012; Jolly et al., 2009; Peck, 1998). Therefore, peacekeeping has proven itself to be a highly effective tool available to the UN to facilitate the host countries to navigate the difficult path from conflict to peace — the transition — and enduring stability.

In the case of Darfur, scholars have identified multiple factors that hindered the successful societal transition, such as numerous warring parties or stakeholders and the absence of any comprehensive peace formula. Furthermore, the transnational actors living in the neighboring regions added to the security complexity of Darfur (Neethling, 2009; O'Fahey, 2006; Sahil, 2005; Shinn, 2005, 2009).

Similarly, the African Union Mission's deployment in Sudan (AMIS) witnessed the absence of a peace agreement and non-adherence to the proposed formula of peace. In addition, the resource constraints and capacity of AMIS had made the situation on the ground even more challenging (see, e.g., Henke, 2016; Vic Mansaray, 2009). A new model of inclusive peacekeeping with AU and UN cooperating for peacekeeping and peacebuilding under the flag of UNAMID was the first such experience of hybrid nature, where troops came from AU and financial resources came from UN (Luqman, 2012; Neethling, 2017). This new model set the pace of demonstrating transformation in the traditional way of peacekeeping with a larger body of stakeholders and greater acceptance to the host country.

Evolving Trends in Peacekeeping Operations

The peacekeeping has become more complex, multidimensional, and challenging in the evolving geopolitical landscape in the post-cold war global order and, therefore, needs strong theoretical underpinnings for critical investigation. In the case of Hybrid Peacekeeping Operations in Darfur (i.e., UNAMID), the idea of 'positive peace' provides incisive analyses. According to Fetherston (1994), the absence of war or conflict eventually paves the way for keeping peace and developing state institutions. Here, the idea should be considered "sets of structures which facilitate the

constructive resolution of conflict and positive human development" (ibid, p. 94, see also Adetiba, 2017; Fetherston, 2000; Oldrich, 2007). With regards to the UN peacekeeping, the attainment of positive peace hinges upon the effectiveness of third party intervention in the form of Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs). Such an intervention creates an 'enabling' environment, facilitating gradual conflict resolution and building state structures and capacities for sustainable peace and functioning institutions (i.e., nationbuilding).

In the case of Darfur, with the absence of the government writ beyond the limited geographies of Al Fashir, El Geneina, and Nyala (i.e., urban centres) and the presence of several decentralized armed militia groups (Flint, 2009), it was indeed challenging to envision the manifestation of positive peace. The absence of a comprehensive peace agreement also made the situation on the ground far more complicated due to the blurred conflict lines. In such scenarios of state with collapsing institutions, expectations and challenges for UNAMID were indeed perplexing.

To build a comprehensive picture of the transformation in the way peacekeeping has evolved, it is pertinent to recapitulate the cardinal aspects of traditional and other forms of peacekeeping. Such an overview will help to identify the pathway towards hybrid PKOs, i.e., from AMIS to UNAMID. It is evident that the traditional peacekeeping relied on the belligerents' consensus and cooperation and was restricted to creating buffer zone(s) between the warring parties by the interposition of unarmed observers or lightly armed peacekeepers; subject to a ceasefire agreement. Then, the important tasks comprised monitoring of border or demilitarized zone (DMZ), ceasefire, truce or general armistice agreement, and supervision of withdrawal of forces. Traditional peacekeeping, therefore, was characterized as 'Chapter VI Operations' (Brahm, 2016, p. 7; see also Malan, 1997). However, it is essential to understand that the complex PKOs contain multidimensional functions, where the military is just one part of the overall political, diplomatic, humanitarian, and economic agenda(s).

These UN missions are mandated under chapter *VI* and *VII* with the prime aim of facilitating the development and sustenance of state institutions and infrastructure and delivery of humanitarian aid. The challenging dimensions include organizing elections; the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) of warring parties; repatriation and rehabilitation of refugees and internally displaced; and protection of safe areas (UN, 2007). Notably, the UN also demands regional organizations to play an effective role in maintaining peace and security in a specific context. With regards, AU has been forthcoming in supporting UN PKOs primarily as most of the operations are concentrated in Africa; hence, AU fulfills and owns its responsibility as a regional partner and/or stakeholder. Such cooperation comes under chapter VIII and, more importantly, provides a foundation from which the traditional peacekeeping evolved into a hybrid form of PKOs — both as an idea and as practice. As discussed in the following section, it is considerate of the fact that the post-cold war era brought specific changes in the overall construct of PKOs. Such a shift was primarily due to the changing nature, scope, and dynamics of conflicts (i.e., inter to intrastate conflicts) (see, e.g., Lijn, 2018).

The demise of the bipolar world and the aftermath of 9/11 events created new dimensions of conflict with the rise of Non-State Actors (NSAs) directly challenging the state's writ with transnational lineages. The transnational terrorist organizations (such as Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabab, and Boko Haram along with their affiliates [e.g., Taliban, ISIS, and ISIL), created unprecedented havoc in various

countries. Many of these militant organizations were the ones that emerged in different African countries.

Multidimensional Nature of PKOs
The transformation of nature of the conflict, rise of NSAs, and dwindling state institutions have led to the multidimensional evolution of PKOs; also known as 'robust peacekeeping' under Chapter VII (see, e.g., Sartre, 2011, p. 7). The evolved nature of PKOs positioned the peacekeepers as involved in self-defense and the defense of UN mandate. However, 'robust peacekeeping' must not be interpreted as 'peace enforcement' (e.g., Karlsrud, 2015; Thakhur, 1994) authorized under Chapter VII. Robust PKOs involve approval of UNSC and consent of warring parties on the use of force at the tactical level. Multidimensional PKOs involve monitoring ceasefire agreements, establishing a secure environment for humanitarian aid, and continuing the political process towards sustainable peace (e.g., Brahm, 2016). It requires multidimensional approaches containing civilian, military, and police components for dealing with the revival of state institutions in political, economic, security, human rights, rule of law, and criminal justice domains in the post-conflict environments.

Emphasis on Partnership with the Regional Organizations
The emphasis is on developing 'partnership approach' with the regional organizations for undertaking major tasks on the ground while the UN will continue to retain the core responsibility of imparting legitimacy and financial support. The UN-EU Joint Declaration of 2003 and the UN-AU Institutional Relationship promulgated after the Security Council meeting in Nairobi on November 19, 2004, are examples of evolving trends of UN's partnership with the regional organizations. There are 12 PKOs worldwide, out of which seven are in Africa (UN, n.d.). Capacities and sustenance levels of AU and other sub-regional organizations should be proportionately enhanced with respect to their increased engagement level in peacekeeping matters. The evolving nature of conflict and threat perception, especially in the African countries where the UN missions are already deployed and unstable regions where UN missions are not there, the NSAs activities affect the governance and security matrix of relevant countries. Such countries are involved in contributing troops for UN missions in Africa at the cost of declining security situations in their own territories, limiting their international cooperation capacity. Therefore, cooperative arrangements like UNAMID can be regarded as necessary and maybe a valuable model for deployment in other African countries.

Hybrid Peacekeeping Operations
Africa's conflicts require comprehensive and multidimensional approaches to successfully tackling emerging threats (Osabutey, 2011). The evolving collaboration between UN, EU, and AU in joint peace operations is characterized by legitimacy, resource craving, and shared values. The developing trends have provided a highly beneficial model of 'hybrid' operations (Prinsloo & Van Niekerk, 2017) in which the UN and the regional organization (such as AU, EU, and NATO) cooperate in various ways in the same mission (e.g., in Darfur, DR Congo, and Kosovo). Such coordination is manifested through strong cooperation between the regional organizations.

The situation in Sudan was much complex and challenging, demonstrating an overstretch by the UN as already the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS)

was extensively involved in support of peace agreement between Sudan and South Sudan. In contrast, the highly volatile situation in Darfur warranted another mission as it was beyond the capacity of UNMIS. The African Union took responsibility and established the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) in May 2004 (HRW, 2006). On July 31, 2007, the UNSC *Resolution 1769* authorized a hybrid UN-AU peacekeeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID).[2] This resolution coincided with a joint AU-UN meeting in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) in which the two organizations agreed on the mechanism for the generation of necessary plans for transition to the UNAMID, and on December 31, 2007, the transfer of Authority (TOA) took place (Agwai, 2007). Unlike other collaborative PKO's, UNAMID is configured as a joint inter-organizational mission with single command structure reporting to both the organizations. The concept of 'hybrid mission' in Darfur warranted to be led by the AU with predominantly African troops sourced from African countries, and the UN-mandated to supply enabling capacities, such as funding, logistics and equipment (Blanchfield et al., 2019).

Even though it is reporting to two organizations (i.e., the UN and AU), there is one Special Representative of Secretary-General (SRSG), one force commander, and one police commissioner operating under an integrated chain of command. The foremost objectives set-forth for UNAMID were Protection of Civilians (PoC) and implementation of Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) amid a very high degree of expectations on the transition from AMIS.

As mentioned previously, the idea of positive peace highlights the essential (pre)conditions for the road to peace; for instance, the peace agreement and warring parties' existence should facilitate the deployment of forces. However, DPA was not a comprehensive peace deal agreed by all the warring parties of Darfur; therefore, it lacked legitimacy. On May 05, 2006, it was signed between the largest rebel group 'Sudan Liberation Movement' led by Mini Menawi and the Government of Sudan (Department of State, 2006). Secondly, Sudan's Government was also not very cooperative to the missions as restrictions on the ground and air movements were frequent occurrences, which also hampered the timely movement of essentially required equipment and logistics. The situation became even worse after the indictment of the then President of Sudan by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in March 2009.[3]

Among significant challenges, facing UNAMID was the absence of peace to keep as the Government of Sudan and the parties to the conflict continued to pursue a military solution. The UN Secretary-General acknowledged that Darfur's stability and the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations depended on the unstinted support by all parties. The analysts demonstrated a pessimist view based on the prevailing circumstances casting doubts on whether the UNSCR mandate was achievable in Darfur. This was a tacit acknowledgement that the Brahimi criterion (Durch et al., 2003) was not met regarding the design, deployment, and operationalization of UNAMID. Some argue that peacekeeping has taken on the trajectory of seeking to protect civilians in war-affected zones without ensuring the political process's existence to address the fundamental problems that generate conflicts. For UNAMID, the Government of Sudan's obstructive policies hindered the deployment of force and impaired peacekeepers' credibility. The non-compliance and obstinate behavior of parties to the conflict have been witnessed in other missions as well, e.g., Democratic

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[2] For details, see https://unamid.unmissions.org/about-unamid-0
[3] For details. see https://www.icc-cpi.int/darfur/albashir/pages/alleged-crimes.aspx

Republic of Congo and Haiti; therefore, Darfur cannot be regarded as an exception. The peacekeeping should have a predominantly political outlook, which demands military and police deployment and other mission enablers after concrete peace agreement and the political process's commencement.

For UNAMID, where the nature of the AU-UN partnership is matured to a great extent, it is still evolving. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate this relationship in a hybrid form of paternalism. Here, in UNAMID, the AU troops perform the treacherous work on the ground while the UN mission staff facilitates mission support operations. UNAMID demonstrates a paradigm shift in AU and UN relations even though it is an asymmetric partnership, as the UN is far older and blessed with great resources and experience compared to AU (Durch et al., 2003). Therefore, in such an arrangement, the advice and resources are likely to continue unidirectional-flowing from UN to AU. However, as a regional organization, AU has relative advantages of proximity to the crises; therefore, it has a vital role in directing efforts to best suit and respect local sensitivities. Nevertheless, regarding design, conceptualization, complete ownership, and mission planning, it appears that the UN would continue to provide enabling environments due to scarcity of resources with AU.

Examining the Conflict Situation in Darfur after Transfer of Authority to UNAMID

Sudan presents a highly challenging environment. Despite its division into Sudan and South Sudan, Sudan — by landmass — is still among Africa's major countries. Darfur is also a vast region with highly underdeveloped infrastructure, abject poverty, and the lowest Human Development Index (HDI) (UNDP, 2009). The airports located in urban centres are also for routine passengers and cargo aircraft. These factors were not considered when UNAMID's deployment was initially conceived.

Furthermore, Darfur is also an isolated region and a harsh environment that poses challenges in sustaining the force.[4] The next challenge is a command structure, which necessarily operates between two distant headquarters — the African Union in Addis Ababa and the United Nations in New York. Such arrangements have indeed caused several operational challenges. For instance, the Joint Special Representative (JSR) reports to both the mentioned headquarters. Furthermore, the organisations' specific cultures are momentous and observed to be ignored at the commander's peril. It is noteworthy that if two organizations have non-identical approaches to one situation, then inter-organizational conflict is likely to prevail. Therefore, a shared approach is highly desirable. In a mission authorized under *Chapter VII*, the force is often required to be mobilized quickly and decisively. In such circumstances, the capacity is a real issue as many of the nations which would have a real impact in Darfur are either unacceptable to the Government of Sudan, unwilling to operate in Africa, and/or too over-committed elsewhere to become meaningfully involved.

AU and most of its contributing nations have not yet fully matured to the extent that they can generate, train, deploy and sustain a mission of this size and provide the headquarters staff to make it fully functional. The troop-contributing countries are, therefore, unfamiliar with the difficulties of expeditionary operations. They are generally dependent on other countries and donors to provide adequate training, equipment, and airlift support. Resources are critical particularly if the peacekeeping is 'robust' as it demands equipment that remains in short supply.

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[4] The temperature during the summers exceeds 50° Celsius

Moreover, as mentioned previously, Darfur has been in a state of humanitarian emergency since 2003. Suffice to say, the causes are complex, confusing and have evolved over time. The Government of Sudan itself is a strong central authority but is very Nile-centric in its outlook (e.g., UNDP, 2009; World Bank, 2017). This is a significant grievance in Darfur and the most dominant root cause of the conflict. The writ of the central government in Khartoum was challenged first in 2003 when a group of Darfurians, denoting themselves as Sudanese Liberation Movement (SLM), rebelled (e.g., Heleta, 2008; Idris, 2013; Salih, 2008). Tired of the government's marginalization and neglect, they attacked the Al Fasher airport, destroying an aircraft and killing around 100 soldiers.

To suppress the rebels, the government, rather than using the army, sent in the armed militia known as the Janjaweed because of the army's doubtful loyalty. This only served to escalate the fighting out of control. Therefore, it was recognized that peacekeepers were required if there was to be any realistic chance of peace. Hence, the AMIS was deployed in July 2004 that was an observer mission relying heavily on donors who provided almost everything from food to Armoured Personnel Carriers (APC). Later, owing to the transfer of authority on December 31, 2007, AMIS formed the nucleus of UNAMID. Against this backdrop, the mission of UNAMID was defined to protect civilians, provide a secure environment in which the humanitarian agencies can carry out their work, and set the conditions under which displaced population can start returning to their homes (i.e., repatriation and rehabilitation). Darfur is a *Chapter VII* mission, but the lead is very much humanitarian in nature and envisions sustainable peace and stability in Darfur.

Nevertheless, the challenge is to ensure the cooperation between the humanitarian agencies and the military. Therefore, we need to be realistic about what can be achieved by external forces brought into the epicentre of such a complex situation and context, particularly when it does not enjoy the host government's full support and cooperation from other stakeholders. Hence, Darfur pretences significant challenges and limitations, such as the climate and the terrain, highly complicated political situation with numerous rebel groups, the ambivalent support of the Sudanese government, and the varying standards and levels of training across the deployed units. Consequently, UNAMID is uniquely complex and has faced tremendous challenges and criticism from media regarding its efficacy.

Nonetheless, UNAMID has made remarkable progress towards conflict resolution in the conflict-prone region of Darfur. The minimum preconditions for durable or sustainable peace and stability were absent (as the construct of positive peace exhibits and desires). In multi-dimensioned complex peacekeeping operations, the international and non-governmental humanitarian organizations' support is crucial in addressing basic human needs that eventually lead to the conflict's settlement. The mission's success in such circumstances often depends on fulfilling non-military humanitarian tasks (e.g., Fleshman, 2010). Critics also argue that despite some degree of success achieved by UNAMID, the mission was critically deficient in a military capacity and political backing was needed to protect the civilian population and adequately support humanitarian efforts. However, UN provides significant and sufficient resources with the budget for the year 2019/20 to the tune of US\$ 257,970,000 (UNAMID, 2020).

UNAMID has proved to be strengthening the tangible collaboration between AU and UN PKOs. It has been further recognized that that AU will endure seeking international support for peacekeeping. The Africans themselves are now asking to be partners in the design, execution, and implementation of PKOs (e.g., Forti, 2019). The

experience has also strengthened Africa's ability to manage and deploy peace forces quickly. Modern trends — such as 'robustness', 'integrated planning', 'multidimensional', and 'comprehensiveness' — provide guidelines for the planning and conduct of PKOs. 'Hybrid' missions are yet another modern trend; therefore, UNAMID in Sudan is the first Hybrid Mission of its kind and a test case for the future. Consequently, there is a greater need to analyze UNAMID to derive lessons and recommendations for future hybrid missions.

There are, nonetheless, political constrictions in confirming an effective collaboration between UN and AU, particularly when there is inadequate communication between both organizations' political leadership. The UNAMID model of peacekeeping if considered appropriate for future hybrid cooperation, especially in Africa, would present an innovative methodology for effectively managing the continent's obdurate crises. Despite shortcomings, complex command channels, and interoperability issues, UNAMID has been reasonably successful in achieving its mandate, and indeed the current situation is far better than 2008/09. However, regarding the political settlement and rehabilitation of the civilian population affected by a decade of conflict, robust international engagement is required (IRRI, 2016).

UNAMID has also been undertaking an appraisal of activities and adjusting good practices and lessons learned in subsequent documents for attaining optimum synergy and profiting results on the ground (UNAMID, 2019). However, there are several alternate views expressed on the efficacy and overall performance of UNAMID since it created huge expectations on its TOA from AMIS, without factoring the capacity and force protection to name a few teething handicaps, inhibiting the accomplishment of the mandate of eventual PoC, provision of humanitarian assistance, and rehabilitation of the displaced population (Muller & Bashar, 2017). Another intriguing aspect to be pondered for future research on Darfur is how, without the host government's concurrence, a mission in the field can succeed. On November 30, 2014, the Sudanese government asked UNAMID to leave as, from their perspective, it was instead helping rebels (Sudan Democracy First Group, 2016). Apart from creating credibility issues, such a situation also made the mission sustenance in most volatile and challenging environments almost impossible; therefore, UNAMID was viewed with suspicions by all parties to the conflict. As a whole, despite challenges, UNAMID has successfully sailed, and peace, to a great degree, is starting to appear in Darfur.

Conclusion

Peacekeeping is an ever-evolving concept. The principles are enduring; however, these must be applied with a modern reality check (keeping under consideration the contextual realities) that makes the concept practical in a specific setting. Furthermore, the operational and tactical considerations should ensure maximum chances of success. Peacekeeping remains at the cutting edge where ideas and practice meet. It is a microcosm of all the issues and tensions within the peace, security, and development dimensions of the international system. The UN Secretariat should clearly articulate the capacity and limitations that missions have to foster to achieve peace and stability. Over the last two decades, the UN peacekeeping has been undergoing a considerable transformation with multiple options (being) considered and implemented with the sole purpose of achieving efficiency and effectiveness. It has undertaken a range of missions in complex and challenging conditions and

transformed methods in which missions are planned and managed, both at headquarters in New York and in the field.

Lastly, it will be necessary to remain cognizant of the legacy inherited from any preceding missions, logistic support, ensuring political lead, avoiding peacekeeping overstretch, and diligence at the Security Council level. It is highly beneficial to consider the regional partners' status and any political overtones while ensuring the clarity of the chain of command and mandate of missions in the field. UNAMID provided a platform where traditional peacekeeping could be suitably modified for a more inclusive outlook and shared responsibilities of regional stakeholders. Despite several inadequacies, UNAMID's deployment has provided an alternate model to be further explored and refined for future PKOs.

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India as a Net Security Provider in Indo-Pacific and Implications for the Region

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Abstract

The US determination to preserve the status-quo and consolidate its global pre-eminence as the sole superpower and China's objective to enhance its share in the global power structures are creating US and China great power competitors in the world, specifically in the Asia-Pacific. The initial US Asia-Pacific strategy, which the Trump administration termed as Indo-Pacific strategy, aims to contain China by increasing military presence and making counter-weights in the region. In this 'containing China' strategy, India is an important ally and the US sees India's potential in the Indian Ocean and beyond as a multiplying factor that could work towards furthering its strategic interests in the region. Therefore, in the wake of US Indo-Pacific Strategy, India portrays itself as an assertive American ally to emerge as a 'net security provider' that could further promote the latter's vested interests in the region. Hence, the active western support to India contributes to New Delhi's pursuit of becoming a regional hegemon. This puts other countries, including Pakistan and China, in serious security dilemma where their legitimate security interests are threatened by the Indo-US attempts to dominate the region. These trends suggest that regional stability is likely to face severe setbacks, and the countries might find themselves in serious military confrontations with each other.

Keywords
Indo-Pacific, Net Security Provider, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Quad Group, Geopolitics

Introduction
The geopolitical environment is currently in a state of flux, whereby the international political order is witnessing a gradual power shift. The American supremacy that contributed towards the unequivocal Western dominance after the demise of the Soviet Union is gradually declining. It is often argued that the transatlantic alliance, serving as the basis of liberal global order, is steadily losing the capacity to influence

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international events in many parts of the world. President Trump's antagonistic relationship towards Europe and Brexit further adds to the alliance's fragility, termed as 'brain dead' by the French President Emmanuel Macron (Bergmann, 2020). The most primary reason behind the uncertainty of contemporary geopolitical environment is the ongoing tussle for power between US and China. While US is determined to preserve the status-quo and consolidate its global pre-eminence as the sole superpower, China, on the other hand, is an emerging great power that is seeking to enhance its share in the power structure. The current global crisis emerging because of COVID-19 seems to have catalyzed this competition with China trying to play a global leadership role in overcoming this pandemic.

According to the Thucydides Trap (which is named after the ancient Greek historian Thucydides), when one great power threatens to displace another, war is almost always the result (Allison, 2017). Therefore, as China challenges America's predominance, the actions and intentions of any even one of them can lead them into this deadly trap, which neither of them may want. Robert Kaplan, a well-known American scholar in the strategic field, believes that "the United States, the hegemon of the Western Hemisphere, will try to prevent China from becoming the hegemon of much of the Eastern Hemisphere. This could be the signal drama of the age" (Kaplan, 2010, p. 41). Therefore, to stop China from taking over a global dominance and leadership role from US, the former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, in 2011, provided a framework for the US Government to refocus national power instruments towards the Asia-Pacific (Clinton, 2011). She wrote, "The future of politics will be decided in Asia, not Afghanistan or Iraq, and the United States will be right at the centre of the action" (para. 1). On the importance of Asia-Pacific, she wrote,

> The Asia-Pacific has become a key driver of global politics. Stretching from the Indian subcontinent to the western shores of the Americas, the region spans two oceans — the Pacific and the Indian — that are increasingly linked by shipping and strategy. It boasts almost half the world's population. It includes many of the key engines of the global economy, as well as the largest emitters of greenhouse gases. It is home to several of our key allies and important emerging powers like China, India, and Indonesia (Clinton, 2011, para. 2)

Therefore, an Asia-Pacific rebalance strategy was adopted with apparent objectives of preserving and enhancing a stable and diversified security order, including the peaceful resolution of disputes; an *open economic order* that promotes strong, sustainable, balanced, and inclusive growth through a level competitive playing field; and a *liberal political order* that promotes peace and human dignity, based on human rights and the rule of law. Since then, US has deepened its partnership with the regional powers such as Australia, Japan, and South Korea, in addition to India, and enhanced its defence posture in the region.

On November 4, 2019, the Trump administration released a document titled 'A Free and Open Indo-Pacific Advancing a Shared Vision'[3] which outlined his administration's vision for the Indo-Pacific region. This document highlighted the US engagements with regional countries for preserving free and open regional order. The document also mentioned India as vital to the US Indo-Pacific vision and stated that US and India are working together to address the regional and global development

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[3] For details, see https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Free-and-Open-Indo-Pacific-4Nov2019.pdf

challenges. From the Chinese perspective, this Indo-Pacific strategy is the continuation of 'Asia-Pacific Rebalancing', aiming to contain China (Zhu, 2019).

In China, the Indo-Pacific Strategy is viewed as a countermeasure to undermine and weaken China's growing influence. According to Le Yucheng, the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of China, "we are all open to initiatives that are conducive to regional development and cooperation, but we are firmly opposed to using the Indo-Pacific strategy as a tool to counter the 'Belt and Road' initiative and even contain China" (Yucheng, 2018, para. 34). Likewise, during an interview with the French media, China's Ambassador to France Lu Shaye expressed concerns regarding the Indo-Pacific Strategy because Washington's initiative was originally proposed to compete with Beijing (Shaye, 2019). The Chinese believe that the Trump administration's strategy of advancing free and open Indo-Pacific aims to create multiple big powers in Indo-Pacific to deal with the rising China under the American hegemony (Zhu, 2019).

Geo-Politics in Indo-Pacific Region

The term 'Indo-Pacific' as a regional construct has frequently been used by the US and its allies in recent years. In the modern lexicon of international relations, this term has gained salience and has widely been used in different aspects. Geographically, the term Indo-Pacific represents the physical connection between the Pacific and the Indian Oceans. Indo-Pacific mainly refers to the vast sea area and its coastal shelves from the western Pacific to the western Indian Ocean, from the US, Indian, Japanese, and Australian perspectives. China, a key player in the Indo-Pacific region, is reluctant to register itself to the Indo-Pacific, and so far, no Chinese official document has used the term. However, in practice, China's economic and strategic interests have straddled across both the Pacific and the Indian Oceans, and it will remain a key player no matter how the geographical boundary is defined.

Nevertheless, despite these differences in describing the regional construct, the four nations — US, India, Australia, and Japan — have established a quadrilateral grouping to structure a future Asia-Pacific order and pursue mutually shared objectives in the region (Clarke, 2019). Despite the American claims that the Indo-Pacific regional construct is not an effort to contain China's influence, experts observe that this construct responds to China's rapidly growing presence and geopolitical influence in the region (Roy-Chaudhury, 2018).

The so-called Indo-Pacific has emerged as a global trade hub, and energy with two-third container trade passes through this region (IPSA, n.d.). The major sea-routes located in the Indian and Pacific Oceans are considered as highways for international trade, especially for the transportation of energy and other commodities. The rising great powers, such as China, are dependent on Indo-Pacific sea routes for their trade and energy supplies; therefore, the security of these sea routes is important as the two crucial maritime chokepoints, Bal al Mandeb and the Malacca Strait, are located on either side of the Indo-Pacific (Ibid). The US rebalanced China's assertive outreach with stirring of a resurgent Japan and Indian excitement to play a big brother to smaller states further add to strategic turbulence in the region (Kaushiva & Singh, 2014).

Therefore, the countries surrounding these two oceans have a crucial role in the region's emerging strategic and economic dynamics. The major US allies that are also the part of the quadrilateral arrangement — i.e., Australia, Japan, and India — are located in this region. From the Chinese perspective, the sole purpose of the US

emphasis on the Indo-Pacific concept and the Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy is to contain its rise and ensure US supremacy across the globe (He & Mingjiang, 2020).

US is also wary of the China's aspirations to maximize its power share in the global system. While the Chinese leadership has resolved to enhance engagement with the multilateral institutes, several of its officials also hint at aspirations to change global institutions' power structure. For instance, during the times when the negotiations for accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) were in the process, Chinese Ambassador reportedly proclaimed, "We know we have to play the game your way now, but in ten years we will set the rules" (Ford, 2015, p. 394).

Being concerned with these aspirations and ensuring American dominance in various multilateral bodies, US stresses greater economic interdependence among so-called democratic states to bolster the liberal capitalist free-market economy worldwide. Towards this end, it is imperative for US to ensure an uninterrupted trade flow among these states and exert influence or possibly disrupt the Chinese economic transactions with its like-minded states.

In the last few decades, the region's littoral states have witnessed enormous economic growth, converting the region into an attractive market for the extra-regional players. While China aims to reach these markets and secure the dominant position, US sees it as assertive and seeks to pull the regional countries in its own camp. Therefore, the mix of economic and strategic interests reshape the nature of engagement between the regional and extra-regional powers. The US perspective aims to connect the Indian and Pacific oceans under a single strategic system and convert it into an economic hub to support the capitalist liberal world order (Khan, 2017). Therefore, the Indo-Pacific region is the most significant aspect of the US Asia-Pacific Rebalancing Strategy, currently termed as the Indo-Pacific Strategy that envisages establishing US pre-eminence in this region by diluting the growing Chinese influence. Hence, regional and global stability hugely depends on the nature of international trade, energy security, and potential military confrontations in this region (Michel & Passarelli, 2014).

India's Aspirations in the Indo Pacific Region

Indian maritime posture has been steadily shifting from defence to pre-eminence, intending to exert influence far from its shores (Ullah, 2019). With maritime component as its integral part, the Indian foreign policy objectives, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, include becoming a significant power in South Asia, continuing economic development, securing and protecting energy resources essential to its growth, and increasing its global influence (DeSilva-Ranasinghe, 2011). The Indo-Pacific region is central to achieving these foreign policy objectives as it contains energy resources necessary for its economic growth and the major states that can help India increase its global influence. Experts observe that one of the primary reasons behind replacing Asia-Pacific with Indo-Pacific construct by US is the hope for Indian cooperation in maintaining a desirable order at sea (Roy-Chaudhury & Sullivan de Estrada, 2018). US sees India as an important country for balancing rising China and creating a new power landscape in this region and reshaping regional security order under its hegemonic support (Zhu, 2019).

On the other hand, India's strategic alignment towards US under the quadrilateral grouping is, therefore, driven by the desire to acquire technological and political benefits that could facilitate New Delhi's pursuit of its political ambitions at global systemic level. It is only natural that the Indian leadership and academia

welcome the Indo-Pacific construct and vehemently use it in its maritime narrative. The use of this regional construct goes beyond the mere use of terminology and is manifested in the deployment of naval assets and conduct of bilateral or multilateral naval exercises by India as a matter of policy (Scot, 2012).

The first Indian usage of the term 'Indo-Pacific' was in 2007 by Gurpreet Khurana and was later adopted by Indian government officials (Scot, 2012). The study of India's Maritime Strategy document suggests that the Indian leadership has divided the Indo-Pacific region into areas of primary and secondary interests. The water bodies on India's coast, including the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, constitute the area of primary interest where the Indian Navy is preparing to exert greater influence in coming years. The extended regions, such as the South China Sea (SCS) in the Pacific Ocean, constitute the secondary area of interest. Therefore, the emergence of the term Indo-Pacific should also be considered in the context of the Indian aspirations. The Indian leadership sees this term as a tool to focus on the commonality of interests with the US and emphasize the perceived prestige that it sees in the potential role of defining regional order. Arun Prakash, the former Indian Naval Chief, noted that using the term Indo-Pacific "impinge on India's prestige and standing and that the term and region Asia-Pacific tends to marginalize India" (Scot, 2012, p. 166).

From the Indian perspective, the Indo-Pacific region concept aims to legitimise India's envisaged security role in the Indian Ocean and in the Pacific theatre. This term is also directly linked with the Indian willingness to serve as a key actor in the US containment strategy against China and its Act East policy that revolves around establishing more robust relations with the South East Asian Nations. Furthermore, this also enables India to magnify its stature from a meagre South Asian power to growing world power. The objectives of the Act East Policy are to preserve a favourable balance of power in the Indo-Pacific by securing the Indian Ocean, integrating with Southeast Asia, and deepening strategic partnerships with other major powers such as US, Japan, Australia, France, and Russia (Jaishankar, 2019).

In the wake of the US Indo-Pacific Strategy, India portrays itself as an assertive American ally to emerge as a 'net security provider' that could further promote the latter's vested interests in the region. Capitalizing on its democratic outlook, growing economy, attractive market because of huge population, and also the historic rivalry with China, India has managed to forge closer strategic ties with the West, particularly US; The active Western support to India helps it pursue the perceived objective of becoming a regional hegemon. US sees the India's potential in the Indian Ocean and beyond as a multiplying factor that could further its strategic interests in the region.

Net Security Provider — What Does It Take?

Though the term 'net security provider' is frequently used both in academic literature and official statements, the Indian and American leadership refrain from explaining what the term really means. The lack of any comprehensive or mutually agreed definition of the term keeps it open to different interpretations. Nevertheless, it refers to a nation that is not only capable enough to address the hindrances in its own security but also that of its neighboring countries and beyond (Mukherjee, 2014).

Therefore, this term, 'net security provider', implies that a country can pursue its own vested interests as well as provide security assistance to other states in the region. Considering the geopolitical environment in any given region, this role

creates an alliance among regional states or generates multilateral cooperation. However, this notion can be problematic once a few regional states hold differing strategic and political aspirations compared to the nation determined to play the role of a 'net security provider'. In this scenario, the difference in interests would only lead to mistrust and generate an environment of competition.

It is worth exploring how a country may claim to provide security to neighbouring states. The following four elements need to be considered to assess a state's ability to offer assistance in the security field to other states:

a. ***Capacity building:*** This refers to a state's ability to impart assistance in training other friendly states' security forces.

b. ***Military diplomacy:*** Military diplomacy involves establishing cooperative military-to-military relations between states. A state claiming to be a net security provider should, therefore, have the ability to offer armed assistance to other states towards pursuing common objectives. Military diplomacy can be pursued by exchanging military officials' visits, holding joint military exercises, or making ports calls whereby a ship of a navy visits port of a friendly navy.

c. ***Military assistance***: This requires military hardware assistance to equip the friendly state with required military technologies to deal with the commonly perceived challenges, like counter-terrorism and anti-privacy, and against the enemies.

d. ***Direct deployment***: This is the most demanding aspect of the role of net security providing nation whereby it is required to have the political will and military capability to physically deploy its forces in any given area of conflict to influence the outcome of the crisis. Readiness to deploy forces abroad needs to be backed by its foreign policy and its strategic priorities in the immediate and extended neighbourhood (Mukherjee, 2014).

India as a Net Security Provider: Ambitions and Policy Approach

India's buzz of being a net security provider in the Indo-Pacific region has been growing louder in official and academic discourse for the past decade and a half. In 2013, the then Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh, stated, "We have added […] Army's firepower […]. We have enhanced the full spectrum of capabilities of our Air Force […]. We have placed special emphasis on strengthening the capabilities of our Navy". He further added that all this had made India "conscious of our strategic opportunities […] to become a net provider of security in our immediate region and beyond" (The Hindu, 2013, para. 2). Likewise, while speaking at the Shangri-La Dialogue in 2009, the US Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, argued, "we look to India to be a partner and net provider of security in the Indian Ocean and beyond" (Mukherjee, 2014, p. 1). The 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review also argued,

> India's military capabilities are rapidly improving through increased defence acquisitions, and they now include long-range maritime surveillance, maritime interdiction and patrolling, air interdiction, and strategic airlift. India has already established its worldwide military influence through counter-piracy, peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts. As its military capabilities grow,

> India will contribute to Asia as a net provider of security in the Indian
> Ocean and beyond (Quadrennial Defence Review Report, 2010, p. 60)

This thinking aligns with the Trump Administration's Indo-Pacific strategy, which aims to contain China by building alliances and raising balancers in the region. The Department of State (2019), on Indo-Pacific, mentioned that the US vision and approach in the Indo-Pacific region aligns closely with the India's Look East Policy. Therefore, the Indian government has paid colossal attention to fostering closer relations with US. The ongoing Sino-US great power rivalry offered India the best opportunity to portray itself as a potential ally that could carry the American weight of arresting China's rapid rise at the regional level. This geopolitical competition has brought India closer to US and has let the former earn the title of 'net security provider'.

India has also been improving its credentials to show the world that it can be a net security provider. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, It aspires to adopt a global outlook in its foreign policy. Rahul Roy-Chaudhury has observed that the Indian foreign policy, which initially focused more at strengthening economic relations in the region, now also includes the political and strategic dimensions (Roy-Chaudhury, 2018) India has lately portrayed itself as one of the rapidly developing countries of the world. Capitalizing on its fast-expanding economic power, India attracts the international community by offering an attractive investment market. At the political level, India emphasizes its democratic character that complements the international liberal order and resonates with the West's global political aspirations.

India has been focusing on increasing its economic growth, but the recent assessment does not look good for India's economy. Asian Development Bank has projected India's growth to slow down to 4 per cent in the year 2020-2021 because of the weak global demand amid COVID-19 crisis (The Economic Times, 2020). However, this growth is likely to go up once the full economic activities resume throughout the world.

At the diplomatic level, Indian foreign policy appears to be more assertive than ever. The Modi government's assertive diplomatic approach is also evident from several of his visits during the last few years. He became the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Israel, signifying the country's focus on strengthening strategic partnership with one of the world's leading arms suppliers. Despite the overt rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran, Modi chose to pay back-to-back visits to these two countries and underlined the Indian aspirations to have stronger ties with both the states. He also hosted leaders from the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on India's Republic day, giving a clear message of India's resolve to enhance relations with these states. Being proactive in his foreign policy and diplomatic approach, Modi asserts that India can meaningfully engage with the outer world. Likewise, this engagement also reflects that India is keen to maximize its influence over these countries. In the year 2019, Modi visited US and received a grand reception, and likewise, President Trump visited India in 2020 and was received with the same fanfare.

In the military domain, India has been hugely investing in acquiring modern weapons systems. Along with the indigenous production, India's strategic relations with the West also help it get access to most sophisticated dual-usable technologies. India and US have signed several military deals and military exchange related agreements such as: the 'Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement' that will allow both countries to use each other's military facilities; 'Communications

Compatibility and Security Agreement' which will facilitate India to obtain critical defence technologies from US and access critical communication network to ensure interoperability between the US and Indian armed forces; and 'Industrial Security Annex' that will facilitate collaboration between the defence industries by supporting the secure transfer of key information and technology.

Recently, India and US also signed the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) to help India get real-time access to American geospatial intelligence and enhance the accuracy of automated systems and weapons like missiles and armed drones (Roy, 2020). India is currently the second-largest arms importer globally, with a 9.2 per cent share of the total global arms import (SIPRI, 2020), reflecting the ambitious military plans of the Indian leadership. India also possesses one of the largest militaries in terms of numbers. In recent years, it is backing its quantitative edge with qualitative enhancements. It has increased its procurements and indigenous program to prepare for its so-called two-front war. The Indian military has also contemplated limited war doctrines, such as the Cold Start Doctrine, that aim to engage Pakistan in a limited conflict under the nuclear overhang. India has increased its armoured forces and mobile artillery in its preparation to carry out such limited attacks.

The Indian Air Force (IAF) has also been modernizing its fleet to complement such doctrines and engage in joint military operations. To enhance its airpower capability, IAF is reportedly buying high tech fighters' jets from countries like France and Russia. IAF currently maintains 35 fighter squadrons in active service. IAF reportedly believes that it would need about 60 combat squadrons to deal with the so-called 'two-front' threat from China and Pakistan. IAF fighter squadrons nominally consist of eighteen aircraft each (sixteen fighters plus two combat-capable trainers —with three additional airframes in storage as maintenance, attrition, or war wastage reserves), implying that a 60-squadron force would muster 1,080 frontline fighters.

In the naval domain, India has been undergoing a comprehensive naval modernization program. According to Maritime Capability Perspective Plan 2007-22, India has planned to acquire 160 plus ships, 40 major combatants, and almost 400 aircraft of various kinds (Confederation of Indian Industry, 2010). This includes the development of a fleet of twenty-eight submarines, both conventional and nuclear. India already possesses one nuclear-powered submarine (SSN), *INS Chakra,* leased from Russia. India's Cabinet Committee on Security has sanctioned a joint Defence Research and Development Organization-Bhabha Atomic Research Centre navy project to build 6 SSNs indigenously. The estimated cost of this project is $12 billion, making it the country's single largest defence project. The Indian Navy also plans to operate a fleet of five to six nuclear ballistic missile submarines to bolster its sea-based nuclear deterrence, particularly in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). At the multilateral level, the Indian Navy also regularly conducts exercises, such as MILAN and Malabar, with other states.

India is already working on enhancing engagement with states around the South China Sea. Joint military exercises with Singapore and friendly port calls to countries like Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and, above all, Vietnam also brings the Indian Navy into these disputed waters. Furthermore, in July 2012, India's establishment of deep-water maritime facilities in Campbell Bay (INS Baaz), the most southerly point of the Andaman Islands, enables India to conduct surveillance operations over SCS.

Historically, India resisted the calls to upgrade the Quadrilateral (US, India, Australia, and Japan) consultation's level because of the Chinese factor, but the Quad countries met at the ministerial level in September 2019, which shows a change in the Indian attitude. India has started 2+2 dialogues with US, Japan, and Australia, which involve dialogues between Foreign and Defence Ministers of the respective countries. It has conducted joint military exercises with ASEAN Plus nations. India has established an expanded maritime security cooperation framework with various island countries in the Indian Ocean, namely Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius, and Seychelles (Ministry of Defence, 2014). Military equipment has also been given to several countries in the past, including helicopters, landing craft, and survey vessels. India also has robust defence cooperation with many countries in the region which involves training exchange, joint exercises, surveillance and hydrography, and anti-piracy operations and exercises (Ibid).

According to the annual report of the Indian Ministry of Defence (2018-19), India held joint military and naval exercises named 'AUSTRAHIND' and 'KAKADU' with Australia. With Indonesia, 7th Army-to-Army Staff Talks were held in Bali, and the Prime Minister of India visited Indonesia during which an Agreement concerning cooperation in the field of defence was signed. Also, joint Army Exercise 'GARUDA SHAKTI' was held in Indonesia on March 7-18, 2018. With Japan, 2+2 Dialogue was held on June 19, 2018, and India-Japan Joint Army Exercise 'FTX JAPAN' was held in India from November 1 to November 14, 2018. With Malaysia, Joint Army Exercise 'HARIMAU SHAKTI' was held in Malaysia from April 30–May 13 the same year. Similarly, with other regional countries such as Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam, joint military exercises were held, apart from many military-level talks and visits. India is also a part of the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM)–Plus, held annually (Ministry of Defence, 2019).

India has negotiated agreements with several states in the littoral IOR to obtain military access to their bases. Such agreements, including access to Indonesia's strategically-located deep-sea Sabang port (Chaudhuri, 2018) and Oman's Duqm port (Panda 2018), will enhance India's geographical outreach. Other than with US, India has also signed a logistic agreement with France, giving India access to the French base on Reunion Island (Times of India, 2018).

Given these indicators, India believes that its rising capabilities that would bolster its comprehensive national power would prove useful in playing the aspired role of a net security provider's. However, with the US backing, these Indian moves will make the growing geopolitical contest in the Indo-Pacific more complex, leading major regional states, such as China, to take countermeasure for safeguarding its interest.

Regional Implications

Owing to its aspirations to portray itself as an emerging liberal economic and strategic power, India emphasizes the potential role it could play in imparting so-called 'rules-based' regional order and asserts the significant contribution to the US efforts to contain China. The term 'net security provider' reflects such aspirations whereby India attempts to bring the regional states into its fold and draw them away from Chinese cooperation by establishing closer ties. The term 'net security provider' also implies that India aims to establish itself as a self-proclaimed regional policeman who can watch maritime connecting routes and strategic choke points in the Indian Ocean

and beyond. The emergence of the Indo-Pacific region as a new regional construct is a step in this regard.

Being a 'net security provider' in a region requires a state's Navy to ensure sea command. In the contemporary geo-economic dynamics of the region, this command is essential to ensure energy security. India aims to establish its command in key maritime pathways and strategic choke points, including the Straits of Hormuz and Bab-al-Mandab. From India's perspective, the ability to influence trade passing through the Strait of Hormuz is crucial because it connects the regional states with the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. Estimates suggest that the Strait of Hormuz once hosted 40 per cent of the total global oil trade (Corbett, 1918).

Therefore, under the guise of ensuring freedom of navigation, India portrays its determination to protect the regional states' economic stakes. India's resolve to collaborate with Iran to construct the Chabahar port in the Persian Gulf is one attempt to enhance the Indian Navy's presence in these crucial waters. This development is also seen as a countermeasure to dilute Gwadar port's significance, jointly built by Pakistan and China. Indian strategic thinkers believe that the Gwadar port may be used for commercial ventures and used to conduct strategic/military operations. However, contrary to this claim, such a command on a maritime trade route enables the state to dominate the maritime activities in a particular area. Likewise, India is also enhancing its engagement in SCS. Strait of Malabar hosts around 55 per cent of India's seaborne trade coming from that region.

Furthermore, US also aims to diminish the Chinese influence in the key passage. Therefore, the combined Indo-US interest in this area is creating challenges for China. These developments hint at India's increasing footprints in SCS that are problematic for China and demonstrate the Indian leadership's willingness to extend its military's presence from the immediate neighbourhood. India's willingness to play a net security provider has serious implications for the regional countries.

From China's perspective, India's greater willingness to serve as a US proxy directly implicates its regional security interests and may cause geopolitical conflicts and structural confrontations. The US Indo-Pacific strategy, involving India as a net security provider, may expose China to the strategic pressure and impact China's promotion of economic integration; thus, posing a threat to China's economic security. The Chinese vested interests in the region manifest alternative interpretation of the geopolitical environment and contest the Indo-US common understanding of a 'rules-based' regional order. A closer look at the Chinese foreign policy aspiration and its engagement with regional states reflect that the country seems to have the following possible vital interests in the region (Wang & Zhu, 2016);

- To prevent or refrain the adversarial navies from dominating key sea-lines of communication.
- To contest the Indian claim of considering the Indian Ocean as an Indian Lake and establish its own hegemony.
- To operate a credible sea-based nuclear deterrent to augment country's nuclear triad.
- To prevent US from establishing closer defence and economic ties with the states that may play against the Chinese interests.
- To expand the allied states' network and promote the Chinese regional integration vision.

To pursue these interests, China has been working upon a strategy, famously known as the 'String of Pearls'. According to this strategy, the country has planned to build a network of ports in the IOR. These include container ship facility in Bangladesh, Gwadar Port in Pakistan, Deep-water port in Myanmar, Intelligence collecting facility in the Bay of Bengal, and Building of Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka.

Furthermore, to pursue the idea of regional integration, China has launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), of which the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is an integral part. BRI aims at infrastructure development and economic integration of countries along the historic Silk Road and promotes the connectivity of Asian-European-African continents and their adjacent seas. However, the full materialization of BRI is constrained by the regional geopolitical complexities. India believes that joining the initiative will put China in an advantageous position against it in the South Asian region. The Indian strategy to deal with the rising China seems to focus on selective cooperation and competition. While it supports and cooperates with China at forums like Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and New Development Bank established by the BRICS States, it vigorously opposes BRI. In this opposition to the Chinese initiative, India is working on several other projects to enhance its connectivity with the regional States. For instance, India supports Russian International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) project that aims to connect Russia with the Arabian Sea, notionally cutting Mumbai-St. Petersburg transport time from forty to twenty days.

Though the Indian involvement in the SCS does not directly implicate Pakistan (particularly in the military field), its recent engagement greatly concerns Pakistan's political interests. From Pakistan's perspective, the notion of net security provider is used 'only' to justify New Delhi's ambitious and hegemonic designs in the region. Pakistan refuses to accept this notion and asserts that India cannot be a net security provider in the South Asian region when it has conflictual relationships with all its neighbours and is pursuing a policy of destabilizing Pakistan from the East and the West (Hashim, 2017). India's expanding influence in the region puts it at a hegemonic position in the region that comes at the cost of Pakistan's security and political interests. Pakistan considers itself an important player in the IOR, and given its legitimate vested interests, Pakistan's maritime approach focuses on protecting its coast and pursuing economic interests in the region. Pakistan's economy considerably depends on the secure Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) as its 95 per cent of trade is seaborne (Clarke, 2019). Any possible Indian influence on these SLOCs may allow New Delhi to disrupt seaborne trade at critical times; thus, leading to Islamabad's economic strangulation. In such a scenario, a hostile environment could rapidly be transformed into a military conflict with the dangerous potential of escalation to the nuclear level.

Though Pakistan currently does not possess any hegemonic or revisionist ambitions in the Asia-Pacific region, it holds a concrete vision towards this region that urges states not to confront and accommodate each other's competing interests. In this regard, Pakistan views the Indo-Pacific region causing instability. Though the Indian and US leaderships emphasize this new construct's economic outlook, it signifies growing and strengthening the alliance of countries against the rising China. This would, in return, directly undermine the security of other regional states, like Pakistan. With the active US help to India to elevate its status as a net security provider, India will significantly enhance its military prowess. This trend hints at the possibility of unfolding arms competition in the maritime domain. Therefore, from Pakistan's perspective, the concept of new regional construct — the Indo-Pacific — is

neither all-inclusive nor represents all States' interests, primarily those of China and Pakistan.

With an increasing demand for energy resources and expected inflow of seaborne trade, Pakistan has been exploring new means of infrastructural development. One manifestation of this trend is the CPEC and the development of Gwadar port. Figures suggest that 85 per cent of the crude oil imported by Pakistan passes through the Strait of Hormuz. Since the materialization of CPEC would lead to enhanced seaborne trade flow, Pakistan's dependence on the critical sea-lines of communication would grow. In addition to this, Pakistan's relatively small coastline of 990 kilometres would make it vulnerable to any potential blockade in the event of a crisis.

Besides, the Indian ongoing naval nuclearization has been another factor directly impeding the policy choices of Pakistan. India chooses to shift the nuclear rivalry into the Indian Ocean, seeking to develop the triad of nuclear forces. India's nuclear submarine program is seen as a mean to ensure deterrence against China, but it has serious implications for deterrence stability between India and Pakistan and has forced Pakistan to take countermeasures. The competition at sea will be a challenge for the regional security and a potential cause of the increasingly frequent interactions between the Indian and Pakistani naval platforms.

Concluding Remarks

The term net security provider reflects India's aspirations to maximize its share of power among nations' comity. With an active US support, India has been gradually enhancing its military capabilities and developing diplomatic and economic engagements with the regional states. India and US have constructed 'Indo-Pacific' as a new term to signify their expanding interests in the two oceans. This strategic collaboration between the two states aims to counter China and help India emerge as a great power. This puts other countries, including Pakistan and China, in serious security dilemma where their legitimate security interests are threatened by the Indo-US attempts to dominate the region. These trends suggest that regional stability is likely to face severe setbacks, and the countries might find themselves in serious military confrontations.

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Afghan Peace Process: Regional Complexities and the Role of China

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Abstract

In the wake of the 9/11 'war against terrorism', Bush's vision of 'Pax Americana' and 'Axis of Evil' played a crucial role in shaping the global interactions among states. It resulted in the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) coalition forces, against transnational terrorism. However, almost two decades later, they neither could eradicate terrorism from the global map nor are anywhere close to achieving the Pax Americana. An analytical study in this paper shows that their exit from Afghanistan, even if it is not a complete exit, will not be an easy task without losing a strong geostrategic foothold in this sensitive region where Russia, China, and India are already looking for opportunities to develop their dominance for regional power aspirations. The theoretical model — comprising the theory of complex interdependence and the regional security complex theory — aptly explains the complexity of Afghanistan's situation. With regards, this paper focuses on the different facets of conflict resolution in Afghanistan, focusing on Pakistan and China's interests and other regional players. China has also emerged as one of the noteworthy players in this context since a peaceful Afghanistan has a long-term impact on the smooth progress of the Belt and Road Initiative. This complex interdependence of multiple players in the Afghanistan peace process has turned it as one of the most thin-skinned and almost unattainable goals. Nevertheless, with various geostrategic and economic interests at stake, we must recognize the efforts being made to bring the peace process to finality.

Keywords

Peace process, Afghanistan, China, complex interdependence, regional players, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

Introduction

In the wake of 9/11, Bush's vision of 'Pax Americana', and 'Axis of Evil' played a crucial role in shaping the global interactions among the states. Both the phenomena resulted in the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 led by the coalition forces — i.e.,

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North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO; see e.g., Hart, 2004). However, even two decades later, the 'international' efforts have failed to eradicate terrorism and materialize the 'Pax Americana'. 'Pax Americana' refers to the US definition of 'peace' denoting to achieve the operational liberal democratic government(s) in the conflict-ridden area(s) of the world (such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria). Here, the main focus remains on the human security and/or socio-economic development of the worn-torn countries to ensure sustainable global peace and security (Dower, 2017).

However, the situation has become more critical not only for US but also for Afghanistan and its neighboring countries. With regards, Afghanistan has remained a highly debated topic since 9/11. The US war on terror and the subsequent operations on Afghan soil have left the whole region in chaos (Betts, 2017), primarily because the efforts could not achieve the strategic objectives set at its onset after 9/11. Consequently, there is a growing realization towards a non-military solution to Afghanistan, mainly due to its increasing importance for the regional trade routes. For instance, the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) and the regional energy trade excessively depend on Afghanistan's security situation. This interdependence among the different states of the region has encouraged them to take a keen interest in the (ongoing) Afghan peace process since their critical economic, political, and security stakes depend on Afghanistan's peace (Khattak, 2019).

It is crucial to acknowledge that Afghanistan presents many complexities because of its peculiar features regarding its geographic location. In addition to being in the heart of Asia, it is surrounded by some important regional actors with whom it shares historical, religious, economic, political, and security bonds (Clarke, 2016). This study aims at highlighting these complexities by raising the following questions: (i) How do the security and socio-economic complexities involve the geographically adjacent states of Afghanistan and the impact they (may) have on the unprecedented growth these states have experienced during the last five years, especially after the initiation of the BRI project?; and (ii) How has the increased connectivity tied China's economic interests in particular, and other states of the region in general, to the Afghan peace process more critically.

To answer these questions, this article analyzes the critical security situation during the last five years by looking at the two parallel developments; first, the Afghan peace talks and related security issues, and second, Afghanistan's growing economic importance for China's connectivity drive, the ultimate success of which depends on the security situation in Afghanistan.

Although several relevant reports and data are available in the academic and policy-making circles, this study attempts to take the earlier assessments a step further by focusing specifically on three important dimensions of the conflict. First, it focuses on the recent developments in peace negotiations (especially during the Trump administration) and their possible implications. Second, this study tries to integrate the region's security aspect with its economic vitality, bringing together the crucial interest of the regional powers. It is recognized that their interests in the Afghan peace and security are unavoidable owing to the important connectivity projects passing through Afghanistan, exclusively focusing on the Chinese role through BRI. Besides, other adjacent states (including Iran, Pakistan, Central Asian states, and Russia) also have some compelling interests in the region. Third, the whole scenario is discussed in the prism of a new theoretical model based on complex interdependence and regional security complex, which is elaborated in the subsequent section.

Complex Regional Interdependencies

The contemporary world politics and its imminent conflicts have multiple dimensions, often being a conjunction of security and economic aspects. One of the major factors contributing to the multiplying complexities of the security issues, and the conflicts in general, is increased interconnectedness. This research realizes that Afghanistan is a puzzle which cannot be defined and understood only through 'hard' security issues (Huasheng, 2016). To solve this conundrum, this article employs a theoretical model based on 'complex regional interdependencies' that provides a plausible theoretical explanation of the research problem under study. The model is built upon two theories: the complex interdependence and the regional security complex theories.

The basic assumptions of the theory of complex interdependence include the growing economic interdependency of states and abating importance of military use(Keohane & Nye, 2016). On the other hand, the regional security complex theory explains the complexity, which denotes that security threats are often posed by regional proximity. It assumes that security is overwhelmingly a regional issue, and threats do not travel long distances; instead, adjacent states are more prone to security issues (Buzan, 2003). Therefore, geographically adjoining states face common and interrelated security threats forming regional security complexes. The economic implications of the Afghan security situation and its geographic importance for China's connectivity drive and trade necessitate studying the Afghan issue through the lens of complex interdependence theory. Moreover, Afghanistan is in Asia's heart and is surrounded by important regional powers that enjoy historical, religious, and cultural affinity with Afghanistan. Moreover, since the security vulnerability of Afghanistan deeply affects the region in general, these states have also been subject to economic and security issues (Price, 2015); thus creating a regional security complex. Hence, Afghanistan and its adjoining region provide a suitable case for complex regional interdependencies where the security threats — emanating from the Afghan conflict — have deep-rooted (security-related and economic) implications for the neighboring states.

Afghanistan is diversely connected to the different states in the region. For instance, Iran and Pakistan have strong religious, cultural, and ethnic ties with Afghanistan. Similarly, it has historic and close political relations with the Central Asian states and Russia; this landlocked region also being (inter)dependent for trade routes, for which the precarious security of Afghanistan poses a regional challenge. Finally, the China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), in this part of the world, greatly depends on land routes, and therefore, the Afghan conflict poses an immense threat not only to the economic interests of China but also to its Muslim majority western regions located near the Afghan border. Thus, the region, having overlapping economic and security concerns, presents a complex interdependence and a regional security complex. In this context, there is an intense desire for peace — through negotiation — to safeguard the interdependent economic interests of the (regional) actors involved.

Finding Solution to the 'Afghan' Issue

Since the start of 2015, Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS) is being carried out in Afghanistan led by the NATO forces. It comprises two complementary missions; first, the Resolute Support Mission (RSM) focused on training, advising, and assisting the Afghan government forces and second, the combat operations by the US

counterterrorism forces along with some partner forces (Gurney, 2018). However, violence has taken a new direction in recent years, as many casualties and injured personnel are Afghans — mostly civilians, police officers, and soldiers. The UN report on the Afghan war confirmed that more than 32,000 civilians were killed in the last decade, and these deaths reached a record high in 2018 (UNAMA, 2019). It is also observed that the number of Taliban fighters killed in this war through airstrikes, night raids, and ground fighting is much higher than that of the foreign nationals. A BBC report has stated that according to the Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, till January 2019, "more than 45,000 members of the country's security forces had been killed since he became the leader in late 2014. Over the same period, "the number of international casualties are less than 72" (Azami, 2019, para. 9).

Talks have also been underway, since 2014, regarding how to execute a peaceful exit for the US forces in Afghanistan; often referred to as another 'Vietnam War' for US (Nordland, 2019). Even if it is not a complete exit, leaving Afghanistan will not be an easy task for US as it cannot be accomplished without losing a strong geostrategic foothold in this sensitive region. Though all the three regional powers — China, India, and Russia — were content previously to let the US handle the complicated security situation in Afghanistan, they are now looking for opportunities to develop their dominance for regional power aspirations (Goodson, 2015). Keeping this under consideration, various American policymakers are not in favor of the announcement, made by the Trump administration, of leaving Afghanistan. It is a long and complicated process that is conditioned by many factors, especially the Taliban's response to peace talks, Afghanistan's financial needs, the security-related situation during the peace process (as the unprecedented number of airstrikes by the US forces and retaliation by the Taliban forces continue), and aspirations of the involved parties (Hudson & Dawsey, 2019). Even if the circumstances unveil in an ideal form, a completely peaceful exit for the US still seems like a far-fetched reality. The US policymakers claim that the main objective of the US invasion in Afghanistan was to prevent any attack on the US soil and this invasion has significantly reduced the terrorist attacks during the last two decades.

However, the situation is different *within* Afghanistan. Despite the US military official stance that the Afghan forces are resilient against the Taliban forces, Taliban either already occupy or are contesting to occupy more territory in the present time than at any point since 2001. With 2,400 military fatalities and an expenditure of $ 133 billion exclusively for reconstruction (CRS Report, 2019), the Afghan war is the longest and third-most expensive war that America has ever fought, and there is no possibility so far of an easy exit from this war. This is evident from the US President Donald Trump's statement who — during his meeting with the Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan — said that he could win the Afghan war in a matter of a week, but he did not want to kill 10 million people (O'Connell, 2017).

Simultaneously, US is engaged in diplomatic measures to end the war which primarily include direct talks with the Taliban representatives. Seven rounds of such talks have been held since October 2018. The move to engage in talks is quite an overturn to the previous US foreign policy vis-à- vis insurgency. A draft framework was concluded, in January 2019, through which the US forces' withdrawal from Afghanistan was aligned with Taliban prohibiting any militant attack on the Afghan soil. Despite this, the chief negotiator from the US side, Zalmay Khalilzad, claimed that nothing had been finalized until then (Global Conflict Tracker, 2019). The Afghan government's reluctance to get involved in such a negotiation has raised a

concern among the Afghans that the process would lead to some complex political settlement that would further destabilize its political situation. It has already resulted in pushing the last presidential elections in Afghanistan from April 2019 to September 2019. In short, the whole situation is encompassed by immense uncertainty; as Zalmay Khalilzad stated, "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed" (Ruttig, 2019, para. 13). However, the Trump administration was willing to bring the peace process to a meaningful stage before September 2020 but remained unsuccessful (Azami, 2019). Nevertheless, there is a diminutive possibility that the plan will materialize as per schedule.

Regional Impact

The Afghan peace process essentially has a more important and complex regional dimension which needs to be understood to grasp the whole scenario. Due to its central location in Asia, Afghanistan's adverse security situation puts the economic and security interests of the adjacent states into jeopardy; since its geographic position contributes to forming a complex web of linkages between the regional security and economic interests. This section sheds light on the regional actors and the implications of the Afghan conflict for them.

The use of slogans, such as 'either with us or against us' in the fight against terrorism, indeed led several states to partake in the war. One such state is Pakistan which, to this day, is plagued by its ally status. The US's continued demand to 'do more' has cost Pakistan many military and civilian lives and created an immense economic crisis. Following the US President Trump's accusations over Pakistan pertaining to its anti-terror efforts, the Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan (through his social media account) responded,

> Record needs to be put straight on Mr.Trump's tirade against Pakistan: 1. No Pakistani was involved in 9/11 but Pak[istan] decided to participate in [the] US War on Terror. 2. Pakistan suffered 75,000 casualties in this war & over $123 bn was lost to the economy. [The] US 'aid' was a minuscule $20 bn. (Khan, 2018).

It was not only an economic and human cost, but it also resulted in a long-lasting social and international prestige dilemma for Pakistan. The country's international image was torn to the worst-possible level, and it will take years to heal and regain some of its lost reputation.

Meanwhile, when Pakistan was internally battling with its own 'Axis of Evil' (i.e., terrorism and economic crisis), India was enjoying economic benefits that come from being a US unusual ally for nuclear and military cooperation — as it serves the US to counterbalance the Chinese dominance in the region. However, to this day, Pakistan has continued to acquire a central role in establishing peace in Afghanistan as has also been acknowledged by many US policymakers and diplomats. Nevertheless, a segment of the US policymakers tends to deny Pakistan's endless efforts in the war against terrorism and portrays the country negatively, especially since President Trump came to power in 2018 (Nadeem, 2018). The US inclination towards India has a major role to play in this matter and, hence, is a source of the regional disturbance. One of the US primary reasons for supporting India and belittling Pakistan is to counter the Chinese positive and flourishing economic and political relationship with the Afghan government and Taliban. The Indo-Afghanistan

relations are supported and assisted by US; thus denying Pakistan of its strategic importance. Pakistan is the country that shares over 1,600 miles of border with Afghanistan and has also given its land to millions of Afghan refugees who have been enjoying a peaceful environment and socio-economic benefits on its territory within Pakistan. In fact, Pakistan is a 'safe-haven' for Afghan refugees and not for terrorists and their allies as claimed by India and US.

Pakistan is indeed a valuable partner for US, and this serves as the reason why the international community actively seeks the assistance of Pakistan for peace talks with the Taliban. Khalilzad has openly acknowledged Pakistan's positive role in the Afghan peace process, such as in the Doha Conference of July 2019 (Aljazeerah, 2019). The US Congressional Research Service has itself affirmed a two-pronged view regarding Pakistan's significance. As per its report, the State Department stated to Congress in April 2019, "While Pakistan has taken some limited, reversible actions in support of the [US] South Asia strategy […] we have not seen it take the sustained, irreversible actions that would warrant lifting the [security aid] suspension" (Thomas, 2019, p. 10). A biannual Department of Defense report on Afghanistan (released in July 2019) further asserted, "Pakistan is actively supporting Afghan reconciliation" (Ibid). According to the journalist Rupert Stone (2019), Pakistan might have been on top in the Afghan war due to its long-lasting stance that war in Afghanistan could only be resolved through peaceful negotiation and the recent developments show that its stance has been vindicated. Pakistan's support for the intra-Afghan dialogue and Abdullah Abdullah's visit — head of the High Council for National Reconciliation (HCNR) — to Pakistan in September 2020 are also seen as efforts to alleviate mistrust and differences between the two states. The visit of the Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, in November 2020, to Afghanistan is also indicative of Pakistan's deep desire to find a peaceful solution to the Afghan issue. The interaction at the highest level shows the commitment Pakistan has with the Afghan peace and the intent to safeguard Pakistan's national and crucial regional geo-economic interests.

Being the most important part of China's global connectivity plan — through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in BRI, Pakistan needs to have peace in its neighboring countries. With its efforts in the Afghan peace process, Pakistan is trying its utmost to realize peace despite facing many hurdles from the Indian side. It is not only Pakistan but also China that has its interests in peaceful Afghanistan, as China has repeatedly expressed the desire to extend CPEC to Afghanistan by connecting Jalalabad (in Afghanistan) to Peshawar (in Pakistan) through a road (Gul, 2018). Afghanistan was initially not a part of BRI, but the gradual increase in the Sino-Afghan economic cooperation and China's active role in the Afghan peace process exhibits the change in Chinese policy. China's geo-economics is making a great leap forward to adjust to the changing interaction patterns among states where increased dependence and coexistence is the basic rule to survive, and 'isolationism' is an outdated concept. As the biggest foreign investor in Afghanistan, China is quite concerned about every development in the region (Bokhari, 2019). There is no denying that China has a direct stake in the peace of Afghanistan. It will contribute to the peaceful implementation of BRI in the region which has restructured the global economic system with new transport and energy corridors financed by new financial institutions led by China itself.

The quest of China for vast energy sources is another of its rationales for a peaceful Afghanistan. With its expanding economy, China is also interested in

Afghanistan because it provides access to the Central Asian states (CAS) — the world's richest energy sources (Umarov, 2017). China is also aware that any disturbance, whether political or security-related, will have a spillover effect on East Turkestan Independence Movement (ETIM) that it has been trying to curtail in the Xinjiang Muslim majority area. China has already made joint efforts with the Afghan forces to curtail terrorist activity on its mainland, including joint patrols and building a military base in the Badakhshan province (Chan, 2018). Another effort of China to curb terrorism was launching a Quadrilateral Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism (QCCM) with Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan. So, for political, economic and social reasons, and to curtail American hegemony, China tends to be actively involved in peaceful settlements between the American government and the Taliban. Historically, except the pro-USSR regime (1979-1989), China has maintained cordial relations with all   Afghan governments. According to Malek Setiz (2014), China had unofficial contacts even with the Taliban regimes. This makes China the only country, other than Pakistan, to be in contact with the Taliban regime (Seerat, 2015).

With the high dependence of Afghanistan on foreign aid for its administrative and socio-economic stability, it is evident that the vacuum created by even the partial exit of the US forces and aid will immediately be filled by other (regional) powers that are looking forward to having a strong foothold in this geostrategically crucial region. Afghanistan's perspective on Chinese involvement is quite positive, and there are instances where it has been expressed that China can play a crucial role in the peaceful settlement of the Afghan issue through the platform of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO; Yongbiao, 2018). This clearly shows that the states in closer proximity are more prone to security threats emanating from the Afghan issue, as is also maintained by the regional security complex theory, which talks about the adjacent states coming under security threats. Secondly, it also indicates that the regional interdependence is closely tied to peace in Afghanistan.

According to a report published by an Afghan think tank, Organization for Policy Research and Development Studies (DROPS), Afghanistan will fit well in BRI as it has a serious infrastructure deficit. However, its geographical proximity makes it the shortest route between Central-South Asia and China-Middle East (Safi & Alizada, 2019). According to Mariam Safi (who is one of the contributors of the report and director of DROPS), "Looking at the BRI map, it seemed that it was bypassing Afghanistan, So we wanted to know if there is any thinking in the Afghan government and stakeholders here on the BRI when it comes to Afghanistan's potential linkage" (Stone, 2019, para. 5). The report asserts that CPEC — being the flagship project in BRI — is the most feasible option to integrate Afghanistan into China's larger regional connectivity plan (Safi & Alizada, 2019).

Although various road and rail connectivity links under BRI are still incomplete, there is hope in peaceful Afghanistan, and China wants to capitalize on it. The Chinese ambassador to Afghanistan, Liu Jinsong (the former head of the Silk Road Fund), has also declared Afghanistan a 'vital partner' in BRI. Therefore, the Chinese policymakers consider the peace process the most important development of the recent time As ambassador Jinsong has suggested, "[by] making the best use of its advantages in geography, resources, demography, connections and international attention and bypassing any disadvantages, Afghanistan may play an active and important role, and make considerable gains, in the development of the BRI" (Zia,

2019, para. 7). Nevertheless, there is a need for a conducive environment to conceive the envisioned role of Afghanistan in the mention project development.

The Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS) even stated the appointment of Liu Jinsong as a strong indicator of the Chinese interest in integrating Afghanistan in the peace process (Safi & Alizada, 2019). Terming China and Afghanistan as 'odd couple', Rupert Stone (2019) has argued that one is a communist state already wary of extremism and terrorism and the other member is a religious hardliner. However, the two have eventually developed a closer relationship driven by a mixture of security concerns and economic factors. Peter Frankopan, a British Historian and author of 'The Silk Road: A New History,' has also acknowledged China's more significant and high-profile role in Afghanistan (Frankopan, 2015).

In addition to contributing to CPEC, Afghanistan will also provide China smooth and trouble-free trade and connectivity with Europe through the Lapis-Lazuli corridor. This was agreed upon on the sidelines of the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA) in 2018. Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey will serve as different nodes of this corridor (Siddiqui, 2019). Afghanistan-China air corridor is another major development from November 2018. It has opened the possibility for other air corridors with countries like Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Kazakhstan, Turkey, and India (Kelemen, 2020). Jonathan Fulton has described China's strategy for Afghanistan as 'fence-sitting'. China has tried to maintain cordial relations with opposing sides similar to its policy in the middle east where it has maintained cordial relations with both Israel and Palestine, and Saudi Arabia and Iran (Fulton, 2019). Afghanistan is one of the primary beneficiaries of China's opening-up policy, and these benefits can grow further in the case of stability and peace in this part of the world.

Other regional actors, such as Russia, Central Asian states, and Iran, also have their interests in Afghanistan. Their proximity to the Afghan territory makes it vital for them to cooperate in the Afghan peace process. As far as Russia is concerned, it has a history of relations and engagement in Afghanistan, and the memories of the cold war have not faded yet. Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Russian Federation has not initiated a clear and comprehensive policy on Afghanistan (Gurganus, 2018); instead, after 9/11, it came up in support of the US policy in Afghanistan to combat terrorism and extremism, and against human and drug trafficking. However, the growing US presence in the region poses threats to Russian interests in Afghanistan and its neighboring Central Asian region historically considered the Russian sphere of influence.

Since the announcement of the US forces' withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014, a new opportunity has evolved for Russia to strengthen its role in its immediate neighborhood (Trenin, 2014). Russia has been trying, since 2016, to engage with the Taliban and other states in the region to find a peaceful solution to the Afghan issue. Nevertheless, US did not participate in the process, and Afghanistan also refused because the Taliban are part of the discussion. Apart from this, the major concerns of Moscow in this peace process have two critical dimensions. The first relates to its own regional position which has suffered a significant setback since 1991. With other powers emerging in the region, Russia does not want its significance to fade away. The second and more important concern pertains to the spread of terrorist and extremist elements (Kaura, 2018); with the expansion of ISIS emerging as a real security threat for Moscow. Through Afghanistan, Russia fears that ISIS can easily establish links with the regional like-minded terrorist organizations working in

Central Asia such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and the Islamic State in Khorasan Province (IS-KP; Sarkar, 2019). Moreover, such circumstances would also facilitate drug trafficking northwards. Therefore, it is essential for Russia to actively participate in the peace negotiations and strengthen its position in the region.

Although there is no consensus over the 'Moscow Process' between Washington and Moscow, the former has hosted three rounds of talks with the Taliban and the Afghan officials and prominent opposition leaders of Afghanistan in 2019 (Gul, 2017). US, in addition to avoiding participation in the Russian efforts, also initiated the Kabul process. These simultaneous peace negotiations make the negotiation process more complex. Even then, there is hope to bring the two cold war rivals to some understanding regarding the Afghan conflict. Since their interests in combating terrorism and narcotics in Afghanistan align with each other, the United States must be cognizant that it would be futile to imagine the success of the Afghan peace process without addressing the states' interests in the region. There is no escaping the fact that international politics and conflicts have greater regional repercussions, and long-lasting peace cannot be achieved in the war-torn state while undermining their immediate implications for the region.

The Central Asian States (CAS) are also interested in the Afghan conflict and the peace process on similar grounds. Given the spread of ISIS in Afghanistan, the Central Asian states also feel a security threat that cannot be evaded unless peace is achieved in Afghanistan. Besides, peaceful Afghanistan will open a new regional economic development scenario for these resource-rich and strategically located states. As a manifestation of their interest in the Afghan issue, a conference was held in Tashkent, in December 2017, that brought together twenty states to discuss the issue (DW News, 2018). However, the Central Asian states are not the only resource-rich countries neighboring Afghanistan; Iran is another such country. It shares a long border with Afghanistan in its south. Being one of the most important regional actors and oil-rich state of the Persian Gulf region, Iran presents a paradox — one of the most critical security challenges and an essential avenue for opening doors for regional influence. The Iranian interests in the Afghan peace process are related to the former's opposition to the US presence on the Afghan territory (Byman, 2018).

In addition to the security-related issues, Iran's vital interests pertaining to the energy trade are also linked with Afghanistan; considering its gas trade agreement with Turkmenistan and the Iran-India gas pipeline (Bakrania, 2017). The situation becomes more complicated because of the Taliban presence and their growing role in Afghanistan. With the sectarian differences between the Afghan Sunni and Iranian Shia community, the Hazara Shia community's protection is very significant for Iran. Furthermore, Iran aims to create permanent influence in Afghanistan, similar to what it has done through Hezbollah in Lebanon (Smyth, 2014). Iran is also concerned with the post-US setup in Afghanistan. Regardless, Iran does not oppose the peace process in any form; rather, it is inclined towards a (favorable) arrangement in Afghanistan that ensures its interests.

Concluding Remarks

A significant point emerging from the discussion above is that all states in the region seek to safeguard their vital national interests in Afghanistan. These interests are sometimes overlapping and conflicting at some other instances, especially when considering competing forces such as US and Iran, and Pakistan and India. The

regional puzzle of the Afghan conflict presents deeper complexities. However, it is hard to establish peace in the region without addressing concerns of all stakeholders. In all these circumstances, one should not expect US to exit from Afghanistan completely. Some US involvement in Afghanistan favors the world peace and stability as Afghanistan has catered to the US war aspirations and kept its immense defense budget engaged for over 18 years. In fact, Afghanistan can be a platform where US and China can engage in positive cooperative activities. The US wishes for a peaceful exit from Afghanistan can be well catered to by Chinese involvement. China enjoys close relations with the Taliban and does not hold the burden of negative historical legacy, and therefore, its role as facilitator is more acceptable. However, at the same time, the US is, and will remain, the primary player in Afghanistan. Hence, both the countries (US and China) need to coordinate their efforts. Both powers have to make sure that peace negotiations are 'Afghan-led' and 'Afghan-owned' as claimed in the last round of talks in Doha. Only this will ensure long-lasting peace for the people of Afghanistan.

China has the leverage of offering an economic activity to Afghanistan through BRI and can bring together more regional players like Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran under one umbrella. As President Xi had declared BRI a win-win cooperation mechanism for regional connectivity, China can make Afghanistan realize the importance of positive cooperation with Pakistan for a shorter and more feasible trade route than the longer one through the Chabahar Port of Iran on the Indian initiative. However, China should not get militarily involved in Afghanistan to avoid getting caught in a security predicament. Instead, China should focus on peace dialogue measures such as the Pakistan-China-Afghanistan trilateral dialogue or 6+1 dialogue on Afghanistan. Furthermore, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) can also be another platform to pursue peace in Afghanistan. Giving Afghanistan an increased representation in various regional forums will ensure its safe and economically progressive future.

Given the history of this region, it can be concluded that all the positive expectations for the regional development are heavily dependent on the peace process as one wrong move can ultimately sabotage the whole process. With several actors involved and their own regional and international strategic goals, there is a considerable possibility of putting the Afghan peace process at stake. However, a cautious and carefully crafted way towards peace can give birth to immense opportunities for the economic progress of Afghanistan, and the region in general, which has been plagued by the Afghan dilemma for long. Thus, Afghanistan can enjoy its position as a crossroad or land bridge only if great powers keep in mind the larger benefits of having peace.

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Mapping Political (In)Tolerance in the Pakhtun Youth of Pakistan

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Abstract
Political tolerance is deemed crucial for political progress as well as the maturity of any society. The present study, therefore, focuses on mapping the political tolerance in the Pakhtun society of Pakistan. In addition to presenting the political history of the Pakhtuns in brief, this article also attempts to locate the foundations of (political) tolerance in Islam (the religion followed by Pakhtuns in Pakistan); by delving into the Holy Book (i.e., Quran) and the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The research was conducted employing a quantitative approach to identify the factors that significantly contribute to the levels of political tolerance in the society under study. The research tool developed by Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus (1979) — after appropriate modifications considering the contextual dynamics — was used for collecting data from 400 young residents of the district Kohat in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province of Pakistan. The respondents varied with respect to gender, area of residence, acquisition of formal or religious education, party affiliation, and political process participation. This research lays out different aspects pertaining to the respondents' depicted tolerant, neutral, or intolerant attitudes. Based on the research findings, all variables — except gender — have played a significant role in impacting the level of tolerance in the Pakhtun youth. However, this research has its limitations which may be catered to in future studies.

Keywords
Political tolerance, Pakhtun society, youth, political participation, political affiliation, disliked political party

Introduction
The unwillingness to extend the fundamental rights and civil liberties to the political opponents is referred to as political intolerance. It is reported that certain levels of

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intolerance exist even in the most well-established democracies, particularly during times of crisis or threat (Merolla & Zechmeister, 2009). The situation is expected to be somewhat more unpleasant in developing countries such as Pakistan. Political tolerance has been envisaged as vital for societal progress, and hence has received much attention in recent years (see, e.g., Gerber et al., 2010; Oskarsson & Widmalm, 2016; Saleem, 2016; Sullivan, Piereson, & Marcus, 1993) due to its much-needed importance for peaceful co-existence (Heyd, 2003) specifically in the multicultural and pluralist societies making up the global village. Political tolerance may be defined in terms of the willingness to express those ideas and thoughts that an individual not only dislikes but opposes. In other words, it refers to permitting ideas that potentially challenge one's way of life (Crick, 1973; Sullivan, Piereson, & Marcus, 1979; Vujčić, 1995). It has many possible contributions in democracy and has also been investigated as a potential personality trait (Knutson, 1972; Sullivan et al., 1981). Furthermore, political tolerance has also been observed to be productive for the societal progress and development on social, economic, and political parameters (see, e.g., Chzhen, 2013; Saleem, 2016; Sumon, 2015; Yusuf, 2013).

Several factors — contributing to the level of political tolerance — have been explored by scholars, and their role has been critically analyzed in this regard. These factors include the curriculum taught in educational institutions (Lawrence, 1976; Nunn, Crockett, & Williams, 1978; Sumon, 2015; Vujčić, 1995; Yusuf, 2013) and social institutions (Ehman, 1980; Mutz, 2001; Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997; Stouffer, 1955; Vujčić, 1995). Researchers have found the potential contribution of democratic principles in citizens' tolerance level (see, e.g., Chzhen, 2013; Ehman, 1980; Sullivan et al., 1981; Vujčić, 1995). Although much is talked about the importance of tolerance in societies and studies have investigated the ways to improve its level among citizens especially in developed countries, little attention has been paid to the selection of an appropriate mechanism of measuring political tolerance of developing states particularly the ones engulfed, chained, and driven in conflicts since decades. This contribution aims to fill this literature gap by focusing on the Pakhtun community residing in Pakistan. The study aims to measure youth's political tolerance in the Pakhtun society while considering the role the different social and political factors, such as gender, level and nature of education, political affiliation, and political participation, play in this regard.

To facilitate conceptualizing political tolerance in the context of the Pakhtun society, this article first sheds light on the political history of Pakhtuns. It then elaborates the discourse on tolerance in Islam, which is the religion that the community under study practises. Next, it lays down the method employed for this particular study which is followed by the results and analysis section.

Historical Background

Pakhtun*s* are generally considered as one of the largest tribal ethnic nations of the world (Barfield, 2010), mainly residing in Pakistan (majorly KP, including the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas [FATA], and Balochistan) and Afghanistan across the 'controversial' Durand Line from centuries (Caroe 1958; Spain, 1963; Taj & Ali, 2018). Their population in Pakistan is estimated to be over 30 million (Government of Pakistan, 2017). They are primarily divided into four core tribes: Yousafzai, Ghilzai, Kerlanri, and Durrani (Hussain, 2000). On the question of their origin, both the indigenous and foreign scholars disagree. The popular theories

describe Pakhtun as Semitic, Greek, or Arian (see, e.g., Aafreedi, 2009; Kakahhel, 1981; Khan, 2000; Khan, 2001; Lines, 1988).

Keeping in view the political history of Pakhtuns, it can be organized into three exclusive phases. The first phase comprises the pre and early colonial (British) time that is marked by their suppression by the British as well as the division in the tribal factions and feuds embedded in *Pakhtunwali*, which is an unwritten code of life (also known as *Pakhtu*). Its elements that are considered to contribute to intolerance and violence in the Pakhtun society, to name a few, include *Toora* (bravery), *Badal* (often understood as 'revenge' but literally means 'reciprocity'), *Badhi* (vendetta), *Paighor* (taunt), and *Tarboorwali* (enmity within cousins). Therefore, Pakhtuns have remained famous, rather notorious, for their violent cultural traits (Schofield, 2003). The divisions and conflicts among the Pakhtun tribes mainly did not let them be politically united (Naz, 2009; Shah, 1999). However, scholars such as Khan (2016) and Shakoor (2013) present a just criticism to this notion by stating that exertion of violence or intolerant attitudes among tribes do not occur without logical and reasonable proof. Similarly, Taj (2011) criticizes the literature that reduces *Pakhtunwali* to some of its constituents that (could) project a wild impression of the Pakhtuns. Nevertheless, the negative implications posed by the aforementioned components of Pakhtunwali to the community's political tolerance cannot be denied.

In the Pakhtun political history, the second phase entails the organized non-violent social and political struggle for their awakening through reformatory socio-political movements, notably the Khodaie Khidmatgar Movement (KKM) of Bacha Khan. Attempts were made to inculcate love and respect for education and get rid of social evils (such as gambling and lavish expenditure on marriages) in addition to resolving enmity among families (Ahmad, 1980; Durpee, 1978; Khan, 2018; Naz, 2009; Taj & Ali, 2018). This ultimately led to the establishment of a politically tolerant and non-violent society as people from different tribes, religious ideologies, and political affiliations were not only living peacefully but also actively participating in politics of the Pakhtun dominated region(s). Unlike the first phase, this mentioned movement was not characterized by religiosity (in the Pakhtun dominant part of the sub-continent; Shah, 1999). However, this period did not last for long spanning from 1920 to 1945.

The third phase of the political history of the Pakhtuns is primarily concerned with the Afghan war and its (on-going) aftermath. Various scholars believe that the Pakhtun society was radicalized through decades-long social engineering by the national as well as the international actors (Dick, 2002; Khan, 2016; Nojumi, 2002; Roy, 2002). This led to the blemished or stigmatized presentation or 'pashtunization' of terrorism (as a phenomenon) both at national and international level (Beg, 2015; Edwards, 2002; Kartha, 1997; Rana & Gunaratna, 2007; Roy, 2004; Taj, 2011; Taj & Ali, 2018). For instance, a manifestation of this is Mulla Umar, the former Afghan Taliban leader (died in 2013) with a Pakhtun ethnic background, who has remained a symbol of terrorism in the global village (Crile, 2007; Haqqani, 2005; Roy, 2002). He paved the way for a fierce and mass killing of certain, in addition to uncertain, opponents from Pakhtun and other ethnic groups along with foreigners (Jalali, 2002).

With this in its recent past, the Pakhtun society has reached a stage where the intelligentsia has either disappeared or silenced. These issues usually pertain to the criticism over Taliban and certain religio-politico violent (armed/organized). However, it is essential to mention here that the study of religious discourse, regarded

as a primary influencer in the Pakhtun context, is also crucial to understanding its role in the community's politically (in)tolerant attitude.

Political Tolerance and Islam

Pakhtuns are popularly referred to have embraced Islam after a collective decision in a *Jarga* (council of elders; Naz, 2009; Naz & Rehman, 2011). Since then, their (individual and collective) socio-political lives have largely come under its influence (Naz & Rehman, 2011; Shah, 1999). Although divergent opinions exist on if the Pakhtuns prefer the Islamic way of life or *Pakhtunwali* (see, e.g., Glatzer, 1998; Naz & Rehman, 2011), there is no disagreement concerning the influence of Islam on their personal and social lives (see, e.g., Glatzer, 1998; Naz, 2009; Naz & Rehman, 2011; Shah, 1999). Taj (2011) has rightly claimed that "despite the introduction of Islam in Pakhtun territories, the Pakhtuns have never given up *Pakhtunwali*" (p. 1). However, in no way, this means that Islam has no role to play in the lives of Pakhtuns. This is evident from how the religion was used, particularly after the subcontinent partition, and during and after the Cold War. It has significantly contributed to dividing the Pakhtuns along the lines and basis of (relative) religiosity. Most of the ones regarded as most religious declared the Afghan war as *Jihad* and took part in it by promulgating this narrative at the minimum. In contrast, it was considered as 'fasaad' (strife) by the ones (considered to be) relatively less inclined towards religion. This section, therefore, aims to explore the Islamic discourse on (political) tolerance briefly.

The Islamic discourse incorporates the doctrine and principles providing a philosophical and theoretical base for tolerance, forgiveness, and peaceful co-existence. Islamic literature, which is mainly based on Quran and Sunnah, has discussed intra and inter-faith tolerance. Before delving into the injunctions in Islamic sharia' that entail the concept and philosophy of tolerance and describing the current picture of the Muslim world in this regard, the words or phrases used in Quran, demonstrating the meaning of tolerance, are presented here.

In the Quran, the terms *sabr* and *hilm* are used to demonstrate the need for a situation which demands patience, tolerance, keeping calm and steady, not to be reactive and repressive. The term *tahammul* is also used for *sabr*; both are synonymous in meaning. Therefore, in Islamic literature, these terms can be regarded as the alternate to tolerance or toleration.

Islam stresses upon patience, forbearance, and tolerance in any unwanted and challenging situation. Moreover, for people who show tolerant attitude and behavior, the Quran promises them the Companionship of Allah as its reward (2:153). Furthermore, Islam not only teaches but also stresses upon forgiveness. It appreciates the aggrieved victim to forgive the aggressor as this would indeed be an affair of great resolution (Quran 42:43).

Furthermore, as per the Quran, the rationale of dividing humans into different tribes is to identify each other, and such a division carries no inbuilt distinction among tribes or peoples (Quran 49:13). Another similar verse of the Holy Quran addressed to Muslims, declares them to be created as a balance nation (Quran 2:143). Therefore, it can be interpreted that Muslims are not to be on either extreme of the polity; they are always to try to come up with a middle way out for any societal issue, either profane or sacred. Hence, Muslims have to adhere to a balanced path in their (collective and individual) lives.

Likewise, concerning inter-faith harmony, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has been directed to ask the people of the Book (Ahl-e-Kitaab: Followers of any divine Book) to come to the table on those points that show some degree of confluence of idea between them (Christians and Jews) and the Muslims (Quran 3:63). This entails one of the principles of toleration and democracy taught by Islamic literature. In addition, another verse of the Quran states, "There shall be no coercion in matters of faith" (Quran 2:256). This principle, presented in the Islamic Code of life indicates that all individuals are allowed to practice their faith the way they like, and no one is allowed to compel the others against their chosen way of life.

Similarly, there are numerous examples in Prophet Muhammad's life (PBUH) that can be quoted as evidence of teaching and enjoining toleration to others. His life exhibits multiple examples of the respect and dignity he gave to the people of other religions. One such instance is when a group of Christians arrived at the Masjid-an-Nabawi (Mosque of the Prophet) in the city of Madina. their (Christians') prayer time approached during the discussion, and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) allowed them to pray in the mosque (Hamidullah, 1941; Wahid, n.d.).

These, along with the similar other verses and principles, can provide a significant base for a tolerant Muslim society. However, it may be argued that many of the Muslim countries present a rather different — and often bleak — picture of tolerance. The division of the Muslim community in 'sects' and 'sub-sects' is not the diversity about which the Prophet (PBUH) stated, "differences of and/or diversity in opinion in my community (*umma*) is mercy" (Annawavee, 1637). It instead establishes itself as a fierce conflicting division where every means of 'otherization', through deeds and actions, is ensured as part of one's belief. It can further be argued that many of these sects and sub-sects are not only declaring each other as *Kafir* (non-believer) but are also raising (militant) groups for targeting the other (Hussain, 2005). The contributory factors for generating such an expulsive and otherizational milieu within the Muslim society can have roots both within and outside of their society. However, the discussion on such factors is beyond the scope of the present study.

Purpose and Significance of the Research

Limiting the discussion to political tolerance in the context of the Pakhtun community residing in Pakistan, this research situates itself in the backdrop where Pakhtun nationalism has become a 'target'.[4] Some political parties also face restrictions while operating in different areas, especially where they are not well supported. Propaganda tools, such as violent literature, hate materials, and fabricated cases, are utilized for the purpose; to mobilize the masses against the targeted political parties (Khan, 2016).

It may be argued that the society under investigation is (relatively) less stable in political terms[5] and is, at the same time, significantly affected by terrorism (Hussain, 2005; Khan, 2016; Taj, 2011; Taj & Ali, 2018). Both these characteristics might have potentially contradictory effects on the political tolerance of the youth. It is a known fact that the society under consideration has been hit by terrorism for decades (Khan, 2016; Taj, 2011). There is a possibility that such a bleak experience might have positively affected its attitude and behavior, leading to a tolerant approach

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[4] The attacks on Army Public School Peshawar (December 2014), Bacha Khan University Charsadda (January 2016), and Agricultural Training Institute Peshawar (November 2017) serve as a few examples in this regard.
[5] Political stability, here, refers to the freedom for political participation and transparency and accountability in the political process.

to end the atrocities. In this context, the present study attempts to measure political tolerance among the Pakhtun youth of Pakistan; by utilizing the tool developed by Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus (1979),[6] adapted as per the contextual understanding researchers' localized experience and observation. This has helped the researchers to analyze the level of political tolerance in conjunction with factors such as gender, level of education, and political affiliation and participation, and therefore, this research is expected to produce new scientific knowledge in the field of political sociology about the society that has not considerably been explored sociologically.

Data and Methods
The present study, employing a quantitative approach, was conducted in the Kohat district of Pakistan. It is situated in the Southern part of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province and is linked with the former FATA and frontier region. with a population close to one million (comprising both major sects — Shia and Sunni; GoP, 2017), the district hosts a military base in addition to a cadet college and Kohat University of Science and Technology as well as several shrines.

Sample
The data was collected from the youth population (with their respective ages between 18 and 30 years) of the locality. A total of 400 respondents were surveyed; this included 310 males and 90 females. 44 of the respondents had never been to any educational institution. Furthermore, 173 respondents resided in rural settings, while 227 were urban residents. The participants of the research varied in terms of their political inclination; supporting or being affiliated with different (national) political parties, namely Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Awami National Party (ANP), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Pakistan Muslim League N (PML-N), and Pakistan Muslim League Q (PML-Q).

Tool of Data Collection
The data was collected through a close-ended questionnaire based on the tool used for measuring political tolerance by Sullivan and colleagues (1979). The instrument was modified, and additions were made in line with the researchers' localized experience and observation. As per the procedure recommended by Sullivan and colleagues (1979) for the computation of the level of political tolerance through their questionnaire, respondents were first asked to select or mention their dislike political party and then report on the level of acceptability for that particular political group in different contexts. All the instrument's eleven items could be responded on a five-point Likert scale with options ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The scale was scored from 1 to 5, with strongly agree=1, neutral=3, and strongly disagree=5.

The scale sum scores ranged from 11 to 55. For bivariate analysis, the Likert scale responses were dichotomized into the categories of 'tolerant' and 'intolerant'. For this purpose, strongly agree, agree, and neutral were merged into the category of 'tolerant' while disagree and strongly disagree were taken as 'intolerant'. Therefore, the sum scores of 33 and less were taken as tolerant and coded as 1 while the scores

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[6] This tool is regarded as the appropriate technique for measuring political tolerance and is confirmed as statistically proven and a well specified model. Another instrument, introduced by Stouffer (1955) for the same purpose, had methodological and conceptual limitations as it restricted the respondents' tolerance to a few pre-mentioned groups and thereby ignored the societal tolerance levels.

above 33 were regarded as intolerant and thus coded as 2. The neutral category was merged into tolerance because neutral, as such, exhibited no negative attitude regarding acceptability for the ones affiliated with the disliked political group. Therefore, within this study's domain, neutral has been termed unconcerned and is perceived under the broader understanding of tolerance towards the disliked group.

Reliability Statistics and Data Analysis
For internal consistency, the political tolerance scale comprising 11 items was checked through Cronbach's Alpha reliability test. The result confirmed that the scale was reliable as the value of the test is .824.

The collected data was analyzed by applying simple frequency distribution at univariate and bivariate levels. To further measure the identified variables' contribution to the level of political tolerance, cross-tabulation and binary logistic regression was carried out. The analysis based on the summary statistics and regression is presented in the following section.

Results and Discussion
The political tolerance level was gaged by considering the youth acceptance or denial of the political opponents or politically disliked groups in certain political roles or tasks. These included holding a public office, delivering a speech, arranging a rally, placing and publishing a book and article in public library and newspaper respectively, participation in cultural and religious activities and ceremonies, and teaching in school or college.

It was found that most of the respondents (78.3 per cent) showed disagreement with the statement that a member of their disliked political party should be allowed to become the Prime Minister of Pakistan. It shows that most young individuals are perhaps not ready to accept a prime minister associated with the political party they dislike. However, in a democratic and tolerant society, every citizen (not expressly forbidden by the state law) has the right to contest for a political office. If such a large proportion of the youth deny the right to its political opponent to be the PM of their country, it certainly reflects a trait of intolerant citizenship. This corresponds to Hiskey and colleagues (2013) findings who have reported that, in many countries, the intolerant citizens outnumber the tolerant individual, which is undoubtedly alarming news for the world.

Furthermore, on a question regarding the willingness to allow a leader of the disliked political party to deliver a speech in the area of the respondents, a significant segment of the population surveyed — i.e., 49.2 per cent — were not willing to do so (with 26 per cent of the responses as disagree and 23.2 per cent strongly disagree). In comparison, 39 per cent of the total respondents showed willingness (11.8 per cent strongly agree and 27.2 per cent agree). Considering the definition of political tolerance presented by Sullivan and colleagues (1979), according to whom one is tolerant to the extent one is prepared to accommodate those whose ideas one rejects, it may be argued that the majority of the Pakhtun youth is not ready to accept the democratic rights of the disliked political group. This certainly is an indication of a high level of intolerant behavior.

Moreover, free speech and freedom of expression are fundamental rights of citizenship in a democratic society, which is also protected in the 1973 constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. However, it was noted that only 33 per cent of the youth surveyed is ready to accept the (availability of) books written by the disliked

group members in the public libraries while a significant portion of the youth (42.3 per cent) is not ready to allow such books to be displayed in public libraries. This exhibits a high level of intolerance and unacceptability towards the political opponents' point of view to be presented in public. Such a prevalence of intolerant behavior is common in (relatively) struggling democratic societies as that of Pakistan. With regards, Peffley and Rohrschneider (2003) have argued that citizens living in high-quality democratic regimes are more tolerant than their counterparts in authoritarian regimes and non-liberal democracies.

In a society that protects its citizens' rights, it is expected that there will almost be negligible approval for the government to record the individuals' phone calls as it is often termed as interference in their privacy. Nevertheless, this research found that most of the individuals surveyed (72.7 per cent) have shown their agreement on recording the phone calls of the ones associated with their disliked political party; revealing their political intolerance in this regard. On the other hand, a small proportion of the respondents (21.6 per cent) have expressed their disagreement with recording the phone calls; hence, exhibiting tolerance towards their disliked political group members. In their study on youth radicalization, Yusuf and Jawaid (2014) have already reported the signs of increasingly exclusionary and intolerant belief systems among Pakistan's youth. A large proportion of the surveyed youth's willingness to record the opponents' phone calls shows that the youth is perhaps inclined to exclude the disliked political group/party from the normal competition or are considering them as the 'other'.

Moreover, contrary to the above, 71.3 per cent of the youth was found tolerant on accepting the opponent group member to teach in the respective community schools or colleges while a scant percentage, i.e., 23.5, was found intolerant to it. This indicates that most Pakhtun youth is ready to accept the opponent political party members as teachers. Likewise, the majority (i.e., 65.7 per cent) of the youth surveyed accepted the opponent group member's participation in religious ceremonies in their respective mosques or other holy places. However, still, 26.8 per cent of the respondents are against such accommodation. Furthermore, a majority (equivalent to that observed in the previous case), i.e., 64 per cent, was found tolerant of allowing the opponent political party members for a job in their area. In addition, 53.4 per cent of the total respondents consented to allow their political opponents to publish an article in newspapers, but 32.6 per cent disagreed with the idea.

Another manifestation of (political) intolerance is denying the out-groups (minorities or other ethnic groups) the right of demonstration. Among the Pakhtun youth surveyed, the majority (46.2 per cent) was found accepting the right of their (political/ideological) opponents to a demonstration. However, a noted portion (36.2 per cent) has shown disagreement over such public demonstrations. The importance of political and civic participation in producing more tolerant individuals has, however, been highlighted in literature; as such activities expose the individuals to a greater variety of political viewpoints and motivate them to work towards compromise in order to resolve differences in opinions (Hiskey et al., 2013).

In response to another item in the questionnaire, the Pakhtun youth were found to have a closely divided opinion on the issue of friendship with the individuals affiliated with the disliked political groups; 45.3 per cent respondents showed their willingness to befriend them while 42.6 per cent expressed unwillingness.

Similarly, every member of a society has the right to participate in cultural activities, and denial of such rights fall under the purview of intolerance. In this study,

majority of the youth surveyed (51.8 per cent) were found to agree on extending this right to the members of the dislike political groups while 32.3 per cent of the participants were inclined to deny this right.

Table 1: Political Tolerance

	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	A member of (this political party) should be allowed to become Prime Minister of Pakistan.	20 (5.0%)	32 (8.0%)	35 (8.8%)	102 (25.5%)	211 (52.8%)
2	A leader of (this political party) should be allowed to deliver speeches in your area.	47 (11.8%)	109 (27.2%)	47 (11.8%)	104 (26.0%)	93 (23.2%)
3	Books written by members of (this political party) should be allowed in the local library.	40 (10.0%)	92 (23.0%)	99 (24.8%)	87 (21.8%)	82 (20.5%)
4	The Government should record telephone data of (this party).	141 (35.2%)	150 (37.5%)	23 (5.8%)	47 (11.8%)	39 (9.8%)
5	(This political party) should be allowed to demonstrate or arrange rallies in your area.	49 (12.2%)	144 (36.0%)	62 (15.5%)	85 (21.2%)	60 (15.0%)
6	I would like to be friend of any member of (this political party).	46 (11.5%)	135 (33.8%)	49 (12.2%)	91 (22.8%)	79 (19.8%)
7	(This political party) should be allowed to take part in cultural activities.	75 (18.8%)	132 (33.0%)	64 (16.0%)	67 (16.8%)	62 (15.5%)
8	A member of (this political party) should be allowed to teach in school or college.	82 (20.5%)	203 (50.8%)	21 (5.2%)	42 (10.5%)	52 (13.0%)
9	A member of (this political party) should be allowed to attend any religious ceremony in your mosque.	89 (22.2%)	174 (43.5%)	30 (7.5%)	43 (10.8%)	64 (16.0%)
10	A member of (this political party) should be allowed for a job in your area.	68 (17.0%)	188 (47.0%)	45 (11.2%)	58 (14.5%)	41 (10.2%)
11	(This political party) should be allowed to publish their articles in the newspaper etc.	69 (17.2%)	145 (36.2%)	56 (14.0%)	55 (13.8%)	75 (18.8%)

The results (see Table 1) demonstrate a distinction between the political and personal life choices of the Pakhtun youth. It is evident that they are, somehow, able to manage the influence of political affiliation over personal social life. This can serve as one of the (potential) factors that provide an open opportunity to all the parties for establishing their political bases in the province. The party affiliations show that the people have, to an extent, accepted all the political parties of Pakistan. However, the division along the party lines is not found to have hindered the social and cultural activities, and networking; in the current circumstances. In the spheres of social and cultural life, the Pakhtun youth show a tolerant attitude. On the other hand, in the different political groups, this division can serve as a potential inherent threat that can be exploited at any time for intra-Pakhtun conflicts. The history of Pakhtun society presents multiple examples of micro and macro-conflicts based on politics.

Exploring Factors Contributing to Political Tolerance

In table 2, the simple frequency distribution of the level of political tolerance is presented on the bases of gender, education, residence, party affiliation, and political participation. The data shows that 59 per cent of the male respondents and 46.7 per cent of the female belong to the tolerant category while 41 per cent of the male and 53.3 per cent of the female belong to the intolerant category. Though the level of tolerance is apparently higher for the male respondents, it is important to consider that the numbers of female participants were much less than the male respondents. The frequency distribution also exhibits the rural residents to be more tolerant than the urban dwellers (i.e., 65.3 per cent versus 41.9 per cent).

Similarly, the respondents were categorized based on education into educated and uneducated. Educated respondents are those who had received formal schooling while uneducated had never been to a formal educational institution. The collected data indicated that educated people being more tolerant than those uneducated (i.e., 53.4 per cent versus 40.9 per cent). However, it is pertinent to mention here that the educated and uneducated segments of the population have not been proportionally represented in the sample and, therefore, require consideration of future research; as a study conducted in Sweden concludes no difference in the level of tolerance based on education (Hjerm et al., 2020).

Moreover, the distribution also depicts that 50.2 and 65.2 per cent individuals with and without religious education respectively belong to the tolerant category. As far as the political affiliation is concerned, the frequency distribution revealed that the percentage of individuals with a higher tolerance level was greater for the ones affiliated with PTI and ANP/PPP, but JI/JUI present an entirely different case. The data also indicates a higher level of tolerance for individuals with a higher level of political participation. However, the (in) significance of each variable will be established (in the next section) based on the binary logistic regression.

Table 2: Socio-political Factors and Political Tolerance

Background Variables		Political Tolerance		Total
		Tolerant	*Intolerant*	
Gender	Male	183 (59.0%)	127 (41.0%)	310 (100%)
	Female	42 (46.7%)	48 (53.3%)	90 (100%)
Residence	Rural	113 (65.3%)	60 (34.7%)	173 (100%)
	Urban	112 (49.3%)	115 (50.7%)	227 (100%)
Literacy	Literate	207 (58.1%)	149 (41.9%)	356 (100%)
	Illiterate	18 (40.9%)	26 (59.1%)	44 (100%)
Religious	Yes	120 (50.2%)	119 (49.8%)	239 (100%)
Education	No	105 (65.2%)	56 (34.8%)	161 (100%)
		151(61.6%)	94 (38.4%)	245 (100%)
Political	PTI			
Affiliation	JI/JUI	30(39.0%)	47 (61.0%)	77 (100%)
	ANP/PPP	18 (66.7%)	9 (33.3%)	27 (100%)
	PML-N/Q	26 (51.0%)	25 (49.0%)	51 (100%)
Political	Low	99 (48.8%)	104 (51.2%)	203 (100%)
Participation	High	126 (64.0%)	71(36.0%)	197 (100%)

Regression Analysis

A binary logistic regression was performed to ascertain the effects of gender, residence, formal and religious education, party affiliation, and political participation on the participants' likelihood to be tolerant. Table 3 represents the Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients results; a general test of how well the model performs. The model was found out to be significant with $X^2 = 54.668$, df = 12, and p = .000; in other words, it means that the model is an appropriate one.

Table 3: Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficient

	Chi-square	Df	Sig.
Step	54.668	12	.000
Block	54.668	12	.000
Model	54.668	12	.000

In addition, Table 4 shows the model summary; giving the values for the Cox & Snell R Square and Nagelkerke R Square which give an approximation of how much variance in the dependent variable can be explained through the variation in the independent variables. It shows that the independent variables considered for this study explain between 12 and 17 per cent of the variation in political tolerance of the Pakhtun youth.

Table 4: Model Summary

-2 Log likelihood	*Cox & Snell R Square*	*Nagelkerke R Square*
493.583[a]	.128	.171

Moreover, from Table 5 that presents the classification, it is evident that 183 and 93 respondents having a politically tolerant and intolerant attitude (respectively) were predicted correctly. A total of 124 respondents were misclassified; 42 with political tolerant and 82 with intolerant political attitude. This depicts that 81.3 and 53.1 per cent of the politically tolerant and intolerant respondents (respectively) were correctly classified. In sum, 69.0 per cent of the total respondents were correctly classified.

Table 5: Classification Table

Observed	*Predicted*		
	Political Tolerance		Percentage Correct
	Tolerant	*Intolerant*	
Tolerant	183	42	81.3
Intolerant	82	93	53.1
Overall Percentage			69.0

The cut value is .500

Lastly, Table 6 presents the results of the binary logistic regression. The Wald test was used to determine the significance of each of the independent variables' association with the dependent variable. Gender is the only independent variable that was insignificantly associated (p = 0.214) with political tolerance. The rest of the independent variables, which include residence (p= .001), formal education (p = *.039*), religious (seminary) education (p = *.040*), political affiliation (p = *.002*), and political participation (p = *.017*), were found to be significantly associated with political tolerance. The association's effect is further explained with the help of odds ratio/Exp(B). Based on this, it is estimated that the urban Pakhtuns are 46 per cent more likely to be intolerant than the rural Pakhtuns. This contrasts with the findings reported by Stouffer (1955): urbanity in American society has a significant and positive effect on political tolerance. The regression analysis also exhibits that formal education contributes to increasing the level of tolerance by 60per cent. This supports the findings of other scholars such as Stouffer (1955) and Bobo and Licari (1989), who reported an increase in tolerance level with increased education. A justification for this trend is that educated people are often exposed to more diversity and learned both practically and mentally to understand their views outside their comfort zone (Peck, 2016).

Furthermore, the analysis reveals that people with having not attended religious seminaries are 1.6 times more tolerant than who attended religious seminaries. This can also be used to understand the higher levels of intolerance for the individuals who associated themselves with the religious-political parties. Moreover, it was found out that a .5 times increase in political participation results in the 1.7 times increases in political tolerance. Thus, affiliation with a political party and

participation in the political process influence the level of political tolerance of the Pakhtun youth.

Table 6: Binary Logistic Regression (Variables in the Equation)

Variable(s)	β	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp (β)
Gender	-.347	.280	1.541	1	.214	.707
Residence	-.777	.235	10.944	1	.001	.460
Education	-.878	.425	4.260	1	.039	.416
Madrassa Education	.527	.257	4.206	1	.040	1.694
Political Party Affiliation	-.402	.129	9.707	1	.002	.669
Political Participation	.560	.235	5.660	1	.017	1.750
Constant	2.839	1.031	7.582	1	.006	17.106

Conclusion

It is observed that a political system can only function better if the people it serves are politically mature and tolerant of the political activities of the parties whose doctrines and ideas are contradictory and opposing. Political maturity and tolerance of any society are subject to the influence of historical legacy and events it has experienced. This study portrayed the level of political tolerance of a segment of the Pakhtun youth. In certain respects, the level of intolerance is alarming; overall, the attitude is almost neutral pertaining to some other characteristics; and concerning some others, a tolerant attitude is demonstrated, such as socio-political (in)equality. This research argues that any non-accommodative attitude (or sanctioned inequalities) can impact the process of political learning and maturity adversely. Intolerant citizenship may have a potential temperament for supporting repressive state policies that may further the conflicting environment and not only cause but also sustain political instability.

The study's overall results show the respondents' tolerant attitude and their supportive proclivity for civil liberties. The political parties have contributed to improving this climate of tolerant attitude and respect for civil liberties. Although systematic social engineering of the Pakhtun society has been carried out, the youth surveyed does demonstrate a tolerant attitude that could be attributed to the favourable structural features of *Pakhtunwali* that can engage conflicting competing narratives. However, this dimension has not been explored in this study and demands scholars' attention to future research. Nevertheless, this study has highlighted certain variables, such as formal and religious education, and political affiliation and participation that significantly contribute to the level of political tolerance of the population under study.

Nevertheless, this study has certain limitations; it depicts only the youth of the Pakhtun society, which is further limited to only one region where the Pakhtuns reside in majority. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to the entire Pakhtun population. It is suggested that a future study may collect data from different areas to explore and present a holistic picture of political tolerance in the Pakhtuns. It is also suggested that future studies may consider political tolerance on the part of both mass public and elites of the society. The present study is also not embarking on the etiology of political tolerance in the Pakhtun society. Therefore, scholars may design

a study to explore the causes and consequences of the political intolerance in the Pakhtun society.

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Media and Armed Conflicts: An Overview

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Abstract

Being newsworthy**,** conflicts attract much of the media attention. The interaction between the media (print or electronic) and the armed conflicts has taken multiple forms in history, and different journalists or news organizations have approached different armed conflicts differently. In the backdrop of the constant debate over morality and objectivity in journalism, this study investigates the evolving academic debate around the relationship of media and armed conflicts, especially with the advent of new communication platforms. The digital platforms that allow the sharing of multimedia content, including social networking and microblogging websites, facilitate disseminating the news content and serve as essential tools for newsgathering. The instantaneous nature of these platforms and unlimited outreach make them attractive tools to be used by traditional news organizations. They gain even more importance in the conflict zones — where it is difficult for them to have their correspondents on the ground. Therefore, the present paper outlines new technologies by the traditional news organizations that have reshaped the relationship between conflict and media. It also discusses the role of news media in shaping public opinion and policy.

Keywords

Conflict coverage, social media, traditional media, digital age, social networking, microblogging, crowdsourcing

Introduction

With technological advancements and the advent of new media, mass communication has been revolutionized. Whether print, electronic or both, the news organizations are no longer solely dependent on the transportation (of newspapers) or provision of landing rights (of radio or television channels) to distribute to the masses. The processes of news gathering and dissemination have now, to a great extent, been digitized. The digital platforms have simplified the process by providing unlimited (digital) space and instant outreach to millions of viewers. Social networking websites, such as Facebook and Twitter, by the (traditional) news organizations, have

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further eased the dissemination process as the content can easily be shared and received on such platforms.

Unlike television, radio, or newspapers, the digital platforms offer the masses the multimedia content and provide greater and quicker two-way communication opportunities. This facilitates the consumers to become part of the news and the release of information directly from the conflicting parties and the access to the firsthand information by the decision-makers (directly from the ones concerned) before designing their policies. The communication is instantaneous while information is abundant on the social media platforms, which may be regarded as 'spatial distributions'.

Latane (1996) has discussed three factors which influence the members of spatial distribution. These include strength, immediacy, and number of sources (Ibid). In the context of the use of social media platforms by traditional news organizations, it can be argued that all these three prerequisites are being met. First, the already established credibility of the traditional news organizations is their strength due to their professional standing. Second, social media provides them with the opportunity to instantly reach out to a large number of individuals simultaneously — fulfilling the requirement of immediacy. Third and last, the following of the traditional news organizations on their social media accounts further helps to increase the impact of the content they produce. However, this has also complicated the processing of the information in various cases, such as in conflict situations.

This paper attempts to unravel the literature on how the media and conflict have interacted with each other over time and evolved with technological evolution. In addition to laying down the prominent approaches to conflict coverage, the study also briefly discusses the potential of the news to (re)shape the policies and the impact the news coverage (may) have on the decision making process. It also discusses the use of new media by the traditional news organizations and the advantages the former offers to the latter. This paper also sheds light on the conflict coverage in the digital age, i.e., the modernity that the technological advancements have brought to the news gathering and dissemination processes.

Media and Armed Conflicts

There is no denying the fact that the media plays a vital role in armed conflicts. Many of the conflicts, especially those in the far-flung regions, could not have come into the public notice without media. Moreover, therefore, the journalists' contribution, in this regard, cannot be ignored (Hanitzsch, 2007). Before delving into this aspect's detail, this paper first presents how the media and conflicts have interacted with one another in historical times and how it has been used for setting agendas during conflicts and wars.

The French Revolution serves as probably the first and foremost example of its kind in this backdrop where the press was extensively used as a propaganda tool. The French General and great military strategist, Napoleon Bonaparte, published his own newspapers during the Italian campaign of the French revolutionary wars to bring his victories to people's glance (Shultz, 2013). The effort was much success in creating a positive image of his persona among the French public in particular, and the conquered European people in general, which finally paved the way for him to become the first Emperor of France.

Later, in the 20th century, when the electronic media — in the form of radio — had already been introduced, it was also used in the two World Wars as a

propaganda tool besides newspapers and pamphlets. Radio has also been found out to have played a crucial role in the Rwandan conflict, where the communal violence between the Tutsi and Hutu tribes was flared up by the local RTLM radio. This violence culminated into the 1994 Rwandan genocide,[3] and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda later held the hate media responsible for the escalation (Thompson, 2007). However, it is acknowledged here that these were not the only instances when media contributed actively — and adversely — in any war or conflict in history.

The flow of information from the war zone plays a vital role in characterizing the conflicting parties. According to Ponsonby (1928), truth is the first casualty in any war. Since the political leaders and state officials convey the (respective) government's stance, there is a need for a neutral source that can impartially report about the events occurring in a conflict zone. Therefore, to counter propaganda and incitement of violence using the means of mass communication, the term 'information intervention' was coined to provide a platform to alternate voices through relaying factually correct information (Thompson, 2002). Hence, it was considered essential to bring the issues to the (political) consciousness of the audience. In such an attempt, the US-based news channel, Cable News Network (CNN), covered the first Gulf War (August 1990–February 1991) live and became a major global actor in the international relations (Gilboa, 2005). Since then, many news channels, including the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), have initiated live coverage of the violence and conflicts.

Information flow from the conflict zones has been revolutionized with further advancement in Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The internet has made it possible to avail the different discrete sources of information, such as radio, television, and newspaper, on a single device (Gilboa et al., 2016). The internet has made it easier for the news organizations to disseminate their message and hosts multiple social networking websites on which the media organizations rely for images and other (activists' or citizen journalists') reports to cover any conflict. This attitude is being observed in the case of the Syrian civil war. The traditional news channels, such as the BBC, have used war zone images posted on the Syrian activists' social media platforms (Doucet, 2018). It may be argued that the audio-visual messages posted online that come straight from Syria have kept the Syrian conflict alive for the traditional media and the public around the globe. Pantti (2013) contends that social media has played an even more significant role in the Syrian conflict than the Arab Spring, in both news gathering and dissemination. With the (news) media's role and contribution evolving over time with the technological advancements and advent of the new media, their approaches to cover any conflict have also transformed over the last few decades. The following section discusses these approaches in brief.

Approaches to Conflict Coverage

Media is often argued to have adopted one of the two primary approaches to cover any conflict. The first approach is when the media becomes a part of the conflict and

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[3] The UN defined the term "genocide" at the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in New York on December 9, 1948. The objective of the Convention was to declare genocide a crime under international law. It condemned genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war and provided a definition of the crime. The prescribed punishment for the genocide is not subject to the limitations of time and place (for more details see http://www.un.org/millennium/law/iv-1.htm).

exacerbates the situation (Puddephatt, 2006). This is similar to what is argued for the role of the RTLM radio in the Rwandan genocide. Another example is the New York Times which represents Israel as a victim and the Palestinians as aggressors. Therefore, Israel considers the newspaper as an essential source (Bourdon, 2016). Bourdon has presented three levels to analyze the quality of the journalistic work produced in conflict situations. These include the journalist's political affiliation with the conflicting parties, Ethno-religious identities of the journalists, and pressures experienced by the journalists in the conflict coverage process. However, the second approach to conflict coverage is concerned with the Independent reporting of the incidents and episodes of the conflict (Puddephatt, 2006).

Villard, in 1903, for the first time emphasized to present both sides of the story; this set the foundation of objectivity in journalism (Mindich, 1998). The approach of moral or ethical journalism further expanded to peace journalism, for which a seminal study by Galtung and Ruge (1965) provided the basis. Their study was based on the analysis of how the three crises — i.e., that in Congo, Cuba, and Cyprus — were presented by four Norwegian Newspapers. Based on their findings and analysis, it was suggested that the journalists should focus on long term development rather than mere events in a conflict: they should be trained to deal effectively with their stereotypes, more content should be focused on reporting from culturally diverse societies, and more coverage should be given to the non-elite individuals and groups (Galtung & Ruge, 1965). Therefore, it may be argued that peace journalism, in general, focuses on humanitarian issues, balanced reporting, and least reliance on elite sources of information in a conflict. Mitra (2016) has contended that journalists must be trained to practice peace journalism in their local contexts.

Some other approaches related to moral journalism, especially for conflict coverage, have also been argued upon. These mainly include the journalism of 'attachment' and 'detachment'. These two approaches also explain the role that the journalists have traditionally been playing in any conflict. The phrase 'journalism of attachment' was coined by a BBC journalist, Martin Bell, with the purpose of not to stand back while reporting from the conflict zones, instead to highlight the horrors of the conflict to impart the sense of responsibility and action to ameliorate the hardships (being) faced by the conflict victims (Bell, 1998). However, as per the detached journalism approach, a journalist should only report the facts and reality without any twist. With contested opinions and views on whether simply to report from the conflict zone — practicing detachment — or interpret the events keeping under consideration the principles of fairness and accuracy, the content available on the social media platforms to be picked up by the journalists poses further challenges in conflict coverage. The coverage of the Syrian conflict is an example, where the images posted by the activists from the war zone and gathered through other sources were interpreted and counter interpreted by the mainstream media as well as the conflicting parties in their own ways (Pantti, 2013). This ensued a debate that further deepened the fissures at local, regional as well as international levels.

Impact of Media on Public Perception and Decision Making

Media plays a crucial role in conflicts because the public, policymakers, and even the conflicting parties assess gravity through the news. It also creates perceptions among the masses regarding the oppressor or terrorist and the victim. This is in line with the assertion of Deprez and Raeymaeckers (2011) who have suggested that the way media represents Israel-Palestine conflict and the parties involved has a direct impact on public perception. Many other scholars (e.g., Han & Rane, 2011; Jackobsen,

2000) have attempted to shed light on the role the media plays, pertaining to any conflict situation, in (re)forming or (re)shaping the public opinion. It is expected that the decision-makers will not ignore the public's opinion on a certain important issue due to the political costs involved (Han & Rane, 2011). It is argued that two primary factors have contributed to the increased role of the (news) media in influencing the decision-making process, especially concerning the (Western) intervention in conflicts. After the Cold War, the absence of security threats has made military intervention a matter of choice rather than compulsion. Second, the media's power to bring war at home with live images from the war zones has helped shape the public debate towards any conflict (Jackobsen, 2000).

The term 'CNN effect', first coined in 1991 after the US intervention in Northern Iraq, has also been extensively used to study the news media's potential to influence policymaking (Gilboa et al., 2016). It generally deals with the violent phase of a conflict and particularly the need for humanitarian intervention (Ibid). However, Jakobsen (2000) has rejected the CNN effect model for being irrelevant, especially when Western governments decide whether to intervene or not in any conflict. Furthermore, Gowing (2011) believes that the approaches to understanding the news media impact on decision making, such as the CNN effect, are irrelevant for being very narrow since they are related mainly to the foreign policy. However, today's communication is bottom-up and affects both the foreign and domestic policies without distinction (Ibid).

Nevertheless, Wolfe, Jones, and Baumgartner (2013), in their seminal study, have qualified the news media as a primary variable for being directly linked to policymaking. In this regard, the feedback model, proposed by Hans Methias Kepplinger, can be regarded as the first of its kind to provide a framework to conduct a quantitative analysis of media effects on the decision-makers. The model represented a synthesis of various approaches, used in previous studies on traditional media, to analyze the news effects (Kepplinger, 2007).

Furthermore, the outreach of the content posted on social media and its instantaneous nature is credited for further increasing the direct or indirect impact of news media on the policymaking process. This is evident from the case of Alan Kurdi — a three-year-old Syrian refugee boy who was found washed up on a Turkish beach in 2015. The toddler's body face-down picture was shared by millions of social media users at different digital platforms (Devichand, 2016). The news, along with the picture, made headlines in the mainstream media outlets. The iconic image of Alan Kurdi going viral was probably not enough to move the policymaking process, but the contextualization of the incident and its publication by the mainstream media did help to accomplish this (Mortensen, Allan, & Peters, 2017).

A study conducted on the 'Alan Kurdi Effect' noted that though the public sympathy on the starkest picture moved the European governments to soften their stance on refugees immediately, this change of policy was temporary and soon they reverted to stricter policies (Sohlberg, Esaiasson, & Martinsso, 2018). Hence, the Western countries imposed stricter refugee laws only after about a month of the incident. Therefore, it is argued that despite the images evoking sympathy, the political contingencies and right-leaning agenda took over the compassion (Ibid). Moreover, it may also be argued that the United States did not militarily intervene (during the Obama administration) in the Syrian conflict because of the absence of sustained campaigning by the mainstream American news outlets for getting (militarily) involved in the conflict and absence of the mainstream American journalists on the ground (Doucet, 2018). Therefore, it is contended that traditional

news organizations' role in public mobilization and government decision-making is relevant.

Evolution in (Traditional) News Organizations

As an initial step, all major traditional media news organizations ensured their digital presence through websites where they posted their (multimedia) content. However, it was not deemed enough, and the social media websites were perceived as great opportunities as they offered instantaneous worldwide outreach through virtual space without any costly structural arrangements for dissemination and gathering of news. It is to note here that social media's importance lies in its sociability where a large number of people (can) spontaneously share their emotions, feelings and opinions (Su, Reynolds, & Sun, 2015). This was largely overlooked in the past by the traditional media due to either shortage of airtime and/or space, or the editorial policies.

The concepts of network and participatory journalism manifest the increasing role of the audience in the news-making and production process. Journalism has now become open-sourced and non-linear (Alejandro, 2010). The digital communication and internet have also altered the news dissemination and gathering methods of traditional news organizations. The new communication technologies have enabled traditional news organizations to receive information even from those areas with no reporters. The citizen journalists post content on social networking and microblogging websites, such as Twitter and Facebook, which is then rechecked, confirmed, and broadcast or published by the traditional news organizations (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012).

Furthermore, the news organizations, such as The New York Times, consider their social media marketing an important strategy to promote their brand (Hong, 2012). Since the outreach on social networking platforms is unlimited, it makes them highly attractive means of news dissemination for the traditional news organizations (Welbers & Opgenhaffen, 2018). Hong (2012) has found a positive correlation between social media use for news dissemination by the newspapers and the traffic on the news website. One can safely argue that social networking and microblogging websites, such as Facebook and Twitter, have become an essential part of the newsgathering and reporting process (Bane, 2019).

Unlike the content creation primarily on the social media platforms, the news generation in traditional news organizations — known for their credibility and responsibility — is more institutionalized. In this situation, Ravasi, Etter, and Colleoni (2019) assert that social media's rise has strengthened the traditional media's impact. Moreover, they maintain that traditional media's organizational reputation makes the social media content, disseminated through the former, acceptable to the public. Therefore, they both complement one another — leading to a maximized impact. The examination of outbound hyperlinking of the top 25 US national newspapers (from 2012 onwards) revealed that 98 per cent of their websites contained outbound links to Twitter and Facebook. This reflects the increasing role of Social Networking and microblogging in news media (Weber, 2017). Furthermore, Su and Borah (2019), in their recent study on the intermedia agenda-setting effect between Twitter and newspapers, contend that social media only portrays the traditional media's agenda.

Conflict Coverage in the Digital Age

The contemporary conflicts are taking place in an environment where production and consumption of news have blended. The viewers can become part of the story; they can share the same news story with additional information or comments. These developments pose a challenge to the existing hierarchies of news production, consumption and distribution (Papacharissi, 2015). Gilboa and colleagues (2016) have called the diversity in communication as hybridity that captures the complex top-to-bottom and bottom to top communication where the (local, national, and international) media, as well as the conflicting parties, interact. The hybridity allows the actors involved in any conflict, including the fighting (armed) parties and the affected communities, to interact with media and the outside world on multiple levels and tell their part of the story. Therefore, digitization and technology have made possible the real-time communication and changed the dynamics of conflict coverage.

The beginning of the 21st century witnessed the expansion of worldwide internet and technological advancements in communication. This was when blogging was introduced as an alternate account to traditional media for covering conflicts (Bennett, 2013). Therefore, the new media's emergence challenged the traditional media's gatekeeping role and the latter's quasi-monopoly over the news. The advent of social networking platforms gave rise to citizen journalism and micro-blogging. These platforms offered interconnectedness among multiple and diverse actors, including the political elite and decision-makers (Tenenboim, 2017). In this backdrop, the news organizations quickly understood the new environment and reinvented their business models where social media gained a central position. The use of social media by traditional news organizations offered them multiple advantages. In the countries where press freedom is curtailed, the social networking platforms, such as Twitter, could serve the purpose since they are less constrained by the geopolitical boundaries (Ahmed, Cho, & Jaidka, 2019). Hence, traditional news organizations could continue their news operations in these states without obstruction.

The new technologies, often through social media, offer the (traditional) news organizations relatively easy access to information from the (practically unapproachable) conflict zones and provide them with multiple tools to gather and verify that information. Since the advent of social media websites, international news channels have also been using modern techniques, such as crowdsourcing, to cover the conflicts. In the Gaza-Israel conflict (2008-9), Al-Jazeera set up a crowdsourcing reporting platform which allowed reporters and citizens to send SMS and Twitter messages to report conflict-related incidents. These reports were counterchecked with other sources and then reported to the audience (Zeitzoff, 2011). As already discussed, the social media platforms, particularly social networking and microblogging websites have also become important news dissemination. Therefore, the importance of digital platforms cannot be subdued when discussing the conflict coverage by the (traditional) news organizations in contemporary times.

Conclusion

This study began to highlight the growing use of social networking platforms by traditional news organizations to cover the conflicts. The appraisal of literature was aimed at understanding the nexus between media and the armed conflicts, the importance of new technologies in the field of journalism in general and conflict

coverage in particular, and the adaptability of the digital media as a platform for gathering and dissemination of news primarily produced by the traditional news organizations. It is highlighted that social media varies from traditional media in various aspects. Some of the prominent differences are that, unlike the traditional mass communication means, the digital — i.e., the modern means of communication — are open-sourced, instantaneous, and inclusive.

When solely relying on 'professional' journalists in the field for covering any conflict, the newsgathering from the conflict zones was a precarious and costly affair for the news media. However, the newsgathering — even from the conflict zones — has become much easier and cost-effective with the advent of social networking platforms. Citizen journalism has made it possible to get real-time images from the conflict zone. The content, uploaded on the digital platforms, can then be disseminated to millions of internet users worldwide. Therefore, it is argued that the logics of media production and media consumption are interlinked on social media platforms. This differentiates them from the way the traditional media functions (Klinger & Svensson, 2015). This is one of the chief reasons why traditional news organizations are now increasingly using social networking and microblogging websites for conflict coverage.

Moreover, the retweets and shares of the news content by the netizens and the news organizations themselves spread the information even to the latent audience who are otherwise unaware of the happenings related to the conflict. Hence, it may further be argued that the traditional media, which has already achieved the status of the fourth pillar of the state, has now become more potent after the advent of social networking platforms. This has allowed the news organizations to become even more impactful — enhancing their ability to influence the perceptions, policies, and decisions.

It is recognized that the impact of the conflict-related news increases manifolds, mainly when it also contains dynamic and moralistic content. Furthermore, there is a greater probability of the public opinion influencing the policy change effectively if the campaigns are managed on both the traditional and social media. The above discussion on the Alan Kurdi effect and the Obama administration's decision to avoid military intervention in Syria highlight that both the new and traditional media are imperative for shaping public opinion and policy decisions.

Despite social media's growth, traditional news organizations' role is still pivotal in amplifying different actors' voices in the armed conflicts. The bloggers and activists (citizen journalists), in the conflict zones, still depend on coverage by the traditional news organizations (Bennett, 2013). One viral picture or video from the conflict zone has the power to (re)shape the public opinion and the governments' stance and policies. In this backdrop, access to authentic and credible news probably serves as the biggest challenge. The traditional news organizations and professional journalists can play their role in this regard and authenticate the information being generated from the conflict zones.

In all these circumstances, it is imperative to explore how communication complexity helps to ignite the conflicts and facilitate an informed understanding of the conflict among public and policymakers. The communication experts can also direct their research to determine the impact of diversification and multiplication of news sources on intervention strategies. From a scholarly perspective, the emerging role of (new) media in conflict resolution and conflict management will also contribute to the field in the wake of new technologies.

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Rethinking De-radicalization and Rehabilitation through the Lens of Prisons: A Case of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Prisons Department

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Introduction

The role of de-radicalization and rehabilitation programs, aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism, has attracted significant academic focus in the recent years (see, e.g., El-said, 2012; Hart, 2020; Kruglanski et al., 2014). Some of the initiatives that have captured much attention of the scholar and practitioner community include the 'prevent' part of the UK counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST, 2018, p. 32; Gearson & Rosemont, 2015; Heath-Kelly, 2013), the Saudi Arabia's 'Prevention, Aftercare and Rehabilitation' (PRAC; Casptack, 2015; El-Said & Barrett, 2018), and the de-radicalization programs in Indonesia (Agastia, Perwita, & Subedi, 2020; Schulze, 2008; Osman, 2014). Indeed, these initiatives significantly exhibit a shift towards a 'soft' approach to countering terrorism and violent extremism (Porgess, 2014), for which the main focus has been on the reintegration of the former (violent) extremists in the community (Kaplan & Nussio, 2018; Podder, 2012).

Pakistan has also initiated several de-radicalization programs in different settings — often referred to as 'De-Radicalization and Emancipation Programs' (DREPs) (Azam & Fatima, 2017; Khan, 2015; Zahid, 2017; see Table 1 for an overview). Since the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province of Pakistan, particularly the (formerly federally administered) tribal region, has been the epicenter(s) of violent extremism and its various manifestations, many of the DREPs have predominantly targeted this region. Although DREPs have produced much-desired results, many practitioners and researchers remain unconvinced regarding their effectiveness. The concerns partly arise due to the lack of empirical data that can establish a positive correlation between the programs and successful rehabilitation or reintegration. Moreover, several scholars have also highlighted the absence of any unified and institutionalized approach and/or mechanism for checking the effectiveness and sustainability of the de-radicalization and rehabilitation centres (e.g., Butt & Tuck, 2014).

To address this concern, this text 'rethinks' Pakistan's existing de-radicalization programs through the lens of prison-based rehabilitation framework(s); explicating the potential of KP prisons as an alternative mechanism for an

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institutionalized and sustainable rehabilitation process. In doing so, it identifies several vital facets of the prison system which are fundamentally developed around the very idea of rehabilitation and reintegration — the 'correctional environment'. For this purpose, the data (corresponding to November 2020) was primarily sourced from the KP Prisons Department, which facilitated a better understanding of the existing (indigenous) infrastructure and the potential of the prisons with reference to rehabilitation and post-release reintegration in the community. This contribution argues that considering the correctional environment and its related infrastructure as the primary factor influencing the behavior of 'subjects' (i.e., inmate/prisoners), the case of the KP Prisons Department would then be a logical institutionalized setup for de-radicalization and countering violent extremism. The essay elucidates the prison-based correctional procedures, primarily the educational programs (vocational, religious, and technical training), designed considering the pre-arrest and post-release employment (prospects) and community (re)integration; which, in turn, supports the correlation between the prison-based programs and recidivism.

An Overview of De-Radicalization and Emancipation Programs (DREPs)

According to Basit (2015), the overwhelming majority of the detained militants and/or those having any (in)direct association(s) with the terrorist organizations were 'youth'. Several scholars have also identified multiple socio-economic and psychological factors as the structural determinants for violent extremism and terrorism — operating at both micro and macro levels (for a detailed review, see De Mesquita, 2008; Makki & Yamin, 2020). To address these factors, it was deemed important to have a 'soft' approach that can ensure not only their 'rehabilitation' but also their successful 'reintegration' in their respective community.

Keeping the above under consideration, the efforts for rehabilitation and de-radicalization of militants in Pakistan were formally launched by the Pakistan Army in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in 2009, after the successful completion of Operation Rah-e-Rast[2] (Azam & Fatima, 2017; Noor, 2013). Later, the DREPs were extended to Punjab and different parts of erstwhile FATA (see Table 1). These programs can be categorized under four main phases: (i) Psychological counselling; (ii) changing extremist views through religious narratives; (iii) provision of (formal) education including vocational training and skill development; (iv) facilitating a smooth reintegration in the society (Basit, 2015; Zahid, 2017).

Furthermore, different civil society organizations are also involved in countering extremism; through the 'soft' approach. For instance, PAIMAN Alumni Trust has adopted an approach of 'positive transformation and engagement' of ex-extremists (see also, Makki & Akash, 2020; Zahid, 2017). However, given the scale of extremism and its multifaceted nature in Pakistan, the existing rehabilitation and de-radicalization strategies appear to be narrow in scope and insufficient against the continually evolving nature of violent extremism.

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[2] Pakistan army launched the Operation Rah-e-Rast, in May 2009, to clean up the Malakand Division (in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province) from terrorists and militants.

Table 1: De-Radicalization and Emancipation Programs (DREPs) in Pakistan

No.	Name of the Centre	Target Audience	Location
1	Sabaoon and Rastoon	Juveniles	Malakand, KP
2	Mishal	Adults	Mingora, KP
3	FEAST	Females	Swat, KP
4	Sparley	Families of the militants	Tank, KP
5	Navi Sahar	Adults	Bajaur, KP
6	Sehar De-radicalization Centre	Adults	North Waziristan, KP
7	Khyber Programme (Centers)	Adults	Khyber District, KP
8	Punjab Rehabilitation Programme	Adults	Lahore, Punjab (Dysfunctional)

KP Prisons Department and Correctional Approaches

The Prisons Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, having been significantly expanded and establishing its footprints in the Newly Merged Tribal Districts (NMTDs), has served the (provincial) justice system under an institutionalized mechanism. Table 2 illustrates the number of prisons operational in the province with respect to their types, and Table 3 sheds light upon the collective population of these prisons.

The KP Prisons Department's mission is to motivate inmates through psychological, ethical, moral, & vocational teaching to become productive & law-abiding citizens.[3] More importantly, the IG Prisons Department has especially been considerate of recognizing the significance of successful community reintegration mechanism (personal communication, November 9, 2020). Consequently, a strong focus is dedicated to the 'reformation and rehabilitation' of the subjects.

Table 2: An Overview of Prisons in KP

No.	Prisons	Numbers
1	Central Prison	06
2	District Prison	08
3	Sub Jails	09
4	Sub Jails in NMTDs	15
5	Interment Centres	09
	Total	*47*

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[3] For further details, visit the KP Prisons Department Official webpage: http://www.prisons.kp.gov.pk/

Table 3: An Overview of Population and Categorization of KP Prisons

No.	Category	Under Trial	Convicts	Civil	Condemned	Total
1	Male adult	8789	2481	32	337	11679
2	Female Adult	154	33	0	01	118
3	Male Juvenile	336	21	0	0	359
4	Female Juvenile	02	0	0	0	2
	Total	9281	2535	32	378	12226
	Percentage %	75.90	20.73	0.19	3.9	-

Several formal education programs, ranging from secondary school certification (SSC) to Master's degree, are available for the purpose within the KP prisons; Table 4 presents the relevant numerical data. It is pertinent to mention here that the authorities are equally concerned about religion's potential role in defining an individual's morality and values. Therefore, special attention is being paid to religious education (for details, see Table 5). Since the misinterpretation or misuse of religious text has been well identified as a radicalization source in Pakistan (Templin, 2015), this research considers a systematic religious education mechanism as an effective way for de-radicalization. The religious education being offered at the KP prisons (re)orients itself towards mainstreaming the religious beliefs and also exposes the individuals to 'other' interpretations of the religious texts that fundamentally promote tolerance, inclusivity, and humanity — as the basic principles of Islam. A comprehensive examination mechanism is in place to assess the individual's understanding of Islam's key fundamentals and the Holy Book — i.e., Quran.

Moreover, to create an inclusive multi-religious environment within the prison, non-Muslim prisoners are encouraged to appear in examination emanating from their own Holy Books. Such a mutually shared environment promotes dialogue, critical thinking, and multi-religious coexistence. As per the data collected from the KP Prisons Department, it is indeed very encouraging to observe the increasing enrolment both in formal and religious education.

Table 4: Formal/Modern Education

Degree/Certificate	No of Prisoners
SSC	386
HSSC (F.A./F.Sc.)	286
B.A./B.Sc.	158
M.A./M.Sc.	44
Oriental Languages	1033
Total	*1907*

Table.5: Religious Education in KP Prisons

Sanad/Certificate	No of Prisoners
Nazira Quran	577
Tarjuma	93
Hifz e Quran	8
Total	*678*

In addition, the correctional approach in prison is also directed towards vocational and technical skills training. Several training courses are being offered in this regard; these enable the prisoners to acquire specific skills, such as electrical technitioning, tailoring, carpentering, computer skills, and the ones pertaining to Information Technology (IT). The main idea behind such trainings is to ensure that the individuals successfully reintegrate in the life outside the prison — i.e., post-release.

The National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTEC), the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (KP TEVTA), and other relevant government departments are also being integrated into these skill development programs. Such coordination is essential to ensure that the efforts have profound impacts on reintegrating the released prisoners in the community. While 669 prisoners have completed technical training, another 476 are presently enrolled in these programs (see Table 6 and 7). Their examinations are conducted by the relevant technical institutions recognized by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Pakistan. The prisoners' involvement in educational and training activities is highly encouraged by the KP prisons administration and are also offered certain remissions to encourage their participation in these correctional activities further.

Table 6: Individuals under Skill Development Training in KP Prisons

No.	Jail/Trade	Haripur	Bannu	Mardan	Abbottabad
1	Electric	25	80	36	-
2	Tailoring	63	77	43	-
3	Computer	29	70	-	-
4	Wood Working	19	-	-	-
5	Plumbing	29	-	-	-
6	Mobile Repairing	-	-	-	-
7	Non-woven Bags	-	-	-	05
	Total	165	227	79	05
	Grand Total				*476*

Table 7: Completed Skills Development Training in KP Prisons

No.	Jail/Trade	Haripur	Bannu	Mardan	Peshawar	Abbottabad
1	Electric	42	120	20	-	-
2	Tailoring	65	150	20	-	-
3	Computer	68	60	-	-	-
4	Wood Working	50	-	-	-	-
5	Plumbing	09	-	-	-	-
6	Mobile Repairing	-	-	-	60	-
7	Non-Woven Bags	-	-	-	-	*05*
	Total	334	230	40	60	05
	Grand Total					669

Conclusion

The existing prison infrastructure in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa produces an abstract model of interventions at a socio-economic scale; with reference to de-radicalization. It already embodies the 'correctional' mechanism that needs to be employed to carry out institutionalized efforts for countering violent extremism. Indeed, there are several (prospective) shortcomings that can be identified when considering the proposed role of prisons in de-radicalization; thus, it cannot be considered as an 'ideal' model by any means. It is a fact that our prisons are massively overcrowded, understaffed, and poorly run which ultimately may compromise the rehabilitation process.

Nevertheless, the prison-based rehabilitation model offers a clearer view of the underlying mechanisms, which can be further formalized through appropriate and timely planning and implementation of multifaceted non-linear pathways, and provision of infrastructural support which is direly needed. Similarly, this contribution acknowledges that more data is needed to fully capture the formulation of the prison-based de-radicalization and its underlying constituent components. It is further suggested that having the basic prison-based model in place, it can further be extended based on some auxiliary phases along the process of de-radicalization.

The objective here is to illustrate the dynamics of the prison system in order to envision an indigenous and institutionalized framework for de-radicalization. Such a (re)modelling necessarily demands continuous revisiting of the de-radicalization programs. Therefore, this paper does not claim that the existing correctional mechanism per se can be applied — without suitable adaptation — in the case of extremists.

Likewise, more research is also required to understand the factors and elements that can play a role in attracting the subjects towards the correctional programs as well as making their outcomes sustainable. This will also help in highlighting various facets of the KP prison-based institutional infrastructure; which is invisible to a great extent. It is also acknowledged that the preliminary analysis presented here is indeed nothing more than scratching the surface. The need of the hour is to engage the academics as well as the (security) practitioners to come up with a durable, sustainable, and institutionalized de-radicalization of the extremists.

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A Renewed Al-Qaeda: Strategizing for a Comeback

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Introduction

Al-Qaeda, the premier global jihadist terrorist entity having its footprints in more than 60 countries and responsible for perpetrating the world's hitherto biggest terrorist attacks of 9/11, appears to have adopted a strategy of working in tandem with local Islamist-jihadist groups. This may be regarded as a strategic shift from directing and masterminding international terrorist attacks to collusion with its associated networks, such as Al-Shabab in Somalia and the Taliban in Afghanistan, and promoting local jihadists in Yemen, Sinai, Syria, and West Africa. Al-Qaeda's local chapters such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), and Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) are also working alongside local Al-Qaeda linked Islamist groups. It appears as if Al-Qaeda no longer subscribes to the approach it adhered to during the times of its former Emir Osama Bin Laden and has substantially re-crafted its strategy under Ayman al-Zawahiri.

It may be argued that Al-Qaeda is quietly rebuilding itself in a new fashion — nurturing the predictions of it being reshaped into the 'world's top terrorist group' (Ryan, 2019). In this purview, this essay aims to examine Al-Qaeda's expansive presence across conflict zones in Africa and Asia and the approach it adopts for rebranding itself from being a global terrorist group to a 'glocal' one while still managing a global character. 'Glocal' is used here to explain the Al-Qaeda's new modus operandi with its face as an organization that is more reliant on its subsidiary groups. During its lifetime, the Islamist terrorist entity has experienced several phases; a centralized organization (pre-9/11), a decentralized organization (post 9/11), and a leaderless entity (after the death of the then Emir in 2011). Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri assumed the leadership mantle in 2011 and attempted to transform the organization, but he was immediately faced with the rising ISIS challenge. He decided to lay low, marking a new era for the organization. However, now, Al-Qaeda has entered a new phase which has been termed as "Al-Qaeda's long game" and "Al-Qaeda's secret plan". It may be argued that Al-Qaeda is more focused on surviving itself and fulfilling its strategic objectives than moving towards the organization's ideological goals. It appears that the current strategy of Al-Qaeda is to work in collusion with local Islamist groups and galvanize local support. This Glocalized approach can be observed in Afghanistan, Somalia, Syria, West Africa, and Yemen. The following section sheds light on this approach which is succeeded by the factors that influence and lead Al-Qaeda in adopting such an approach.

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Al-Qaeda's Strategic Approach

It is important to study the functioning of different terrorist organizations in relation to Al-Qaeda to understand its strategic shift. Afghan Taliban have remained the primary backers of Al-Qaeda; providing them safe havens in the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan (1996-2001). The relationship between the two groups is still reaping mutual benefits; the only change observed being that Al-Qaeda now works as a support group to the Taliban for Islamist insurgency in Afghanistan. Not only that Al-Qaeda-run training camps have been discovered in Afghanistan, but Al-Qaeda also issues a monthly magazine describing the military activities of the Afghan Taliban. Additionally, the Al-Qaeda franchise for South Asia — Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) — is the primary force fighting alongside the Afghan Taliban. AQIS leaders, such as its former Emir Asim Umar and other high command leaders including Rehan al-Pakistani and Abdul Haseeb Al-Kashmiri, were killed in 2019 by the US and Afghan forces while they were fighting alongside Afghan Taliban in the Helmand province (BBC News, 2019).

Furthermore, one of the largest AQIS terrorist training camps was discovered by US forces in the Shorabak district of the Kandahar province in 2015, a traditional stronghold of Afghan Taliban (Joscelyn, 2015). The Afghan Taliban have never condemned Al-Qaeda and its subsidiary groups or promised to oust them from Afghanistan during peace talks, though they agreed to fight and defeat ISIS's Khorasan chapter based in eastern Afghanistan. According to a recent UN report on Afghanistan, Al-Qaeda has its footprints in 12 (out of its total 34) provinces, and with Taliban's assurances of not severing ties, the Haqqani Network of Afghan Taliban has established a new joint unit of 2000 militants in alliance with Al-Qaeda.[2] Al-Qaeda also congratulated the Taliban leadership on 'their victory against US in Afghanistan' on signing the US-Taliban peace deal on February 29, 2020, through their official monthly magazine Nawa e Afghan Jihad, which pays tribute to this feat, was later renamed to Nawa-e-Ghazwa-e-Hind. This case indicates that unlike its perceived image as an umbrella group for all Islamist-jihadist movements worldwide, Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan (also AQIS) works with the Afghan Taliban as a support and subsidiary organization and cooperating for the Taliban war efforts by all means. This relationship would help Al-Qaeda acquire a future staging area in Afghanistan and can be considered as a broader Al-Qaeda policy — something of a strategic shift.

Unlike the Afghan Taliban, Al-Shabab — a local Salafist group of Somalia and a breakaway faction of the local movement known as the Islamic Courts Union — is an Islamist terrorist group affiliated with Al-Qaeda. According to the Bin Laden Book Shelf records and letters published by Directorate of National Intelligence (DNI), Al-Shabab wanted to work as an auxiliary of Al-Qaeda for long; however, Bin-Laden did not want the counter-terrorist community to focus on this group because of its relations with Al-Qaeda. Later, Al-Shabab pledged allegiance to Bin Laden and officially became an Al-Qaeda entity. The regional focus of Al-Shabab is argued to be an approach that Al-Qaeda greatly respects. Al-Shabab has primarily focused on Somalia, Kenya, and other neighboring countries, instead of the West, for carrying out its terrorist attacks. Despite the rise of ISIS, Al-Shabab continued to remain affiliated with Al-Qaeda and has also established links with regional Al-Qaeda affiliates (such as AQIM) and other Islamist terrorist groups (BBC News, 2017) and

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[2] For details on this, please see Eleventh report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2501 (2019) concerning the Taliban and other associated individuals and entities constituting the threat to the peace, stability and security of Afghanistan, May 27, 2020.

also supports Al-Qaeda in Yemen. Currently, Al-Shabab — in connivance with Al-Qaeda — rules over a large swath of territory in Somalia and continues to perpetrate terrorist attacks in the region.

Al-Qaeda's presence in the Syrian civil war (starting in 2011) is another unique case. The Nusra Front (Jahbat al-Nusra) led by Abu Mohammad al-Julani, which had pledged allegiance to Al-Qaeda's Emir Ayman al-Zawahiri in 2013 (BBC News, 2013), was at one point termed as the deadliest of all Islamist terrorist groups involved in the conflict. Al-Qaeda's Emir also sided with al-Julani on the dispute over leadership between him and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Following this, al-Baghdadi parted ways with Al-Qaeda and led his faction, namely ISIS, to carve out territories in Syria and Iraq; eventually proclaiming the Islamic State and Caliphate in 2014. Later, when Nusra Front rechristened into *Hayat ut Tahrir wal Sham* (HTS) in 2016 and decided to have an independent stance (disassociating itself from Al-Qaeda because of fear of backlash from Global Coalition against ISIS) while ruling over Idlib province (which it still does), a new Al-Qaeda linked group — Tanzim Hurras ad-Din — surfaced in 2018 under the leadership of Al-Qaeda veterans Khalid al-Aruri and Abu Hammam al-Shami.[3] This organization was a merger of several factions that previously fought alongside HTS (Hamming & Ostaeyen, 2018).[4] Neither HTS nor Tanzim Hurras ad-Din, when affiliated with Al-Qaeda, attempted to perpetrate terrorist strikes in the western countries — a move, unlike ISIS which masterminded several terrorist attacks in US and Western Europe. This strategy of laying low, surviving the onslaught, and not seeking attention is argued to have worked in their favor. Professor Bruce Hoffman claims that Al-Qaeda currently has the greatest number of militants at its disposal in its entire history; the largest fraction of which is involved in the Syrian conflict (Hoffman, 2018).[5] This situation is indicative of the successful implementation of the Al-Qaeda's strategy of surviving and accumulating strength, territory, weapons, recruits, and quasi-states. This is probably the reason why amid the fall of Raqa in 2017, where ISIS was faced with disarray, Al-Qaeda has still managed to retain its strength.

Similarly, in Yemen, Al-Qaeda established its footprint in the early 2000s, and it continues to grow since then as the country weakens at a fast pace. Some of Al-Qaeda's top commanders, leaders, and stalwarts (including Nasir al-Wahayshi, Qasim al-Raimi, and Khalid Batrafi) besides ideologues like Anwar al-Awlaki and Mohammad al-Zindani hail from Yemen. In addition, the country hosts multiple Al-Qaeda affiliated Islamist terrorist groups (such as Aden and Abyan Islamic Army and Ansar al-Sharia Yemen), falling under the broader umbrella of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) which is one of the strongest and most active Al-Qaeda affiliates. Since the Islamist insurgency in Yemen also has a local color, Al-Qaeda, despite being a global jihadist entity, has acknowledged this fact and continues to support the local Islamist insurgents fighting the government and Shia-Houthi rebels

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[3] Other Al-Qaeda veterans also joined the newly established group including Sami al-Uraydi, Abu Julaybib, Abu Khallad al-Muhandis, and Abu al-Qassam from Jordan and Abu Abdul Rahman al-Makki from Saudi Arabia.

[4] These factions included Jaysh al-Malahem, Jaysh al-Sahel, Jaysh al-Badiyya, Saraya al-Sahel, Saraya Kabul, and Jund al-Shariah.

[5] According to him, Al-Qaeda has 40,000 fighters in Asia and Africa who are involved in different conflicts, such as in Syria (10,000-20,000), Egypt (1,000), South Asia (1,100), Yemen (4,000), Somalia (7,000-9,000), Libya (5,000), and other African countries (4,000).

of the Ansar Allah terrorist group. The Yemeni Al-Qaeda has a strong presence in the country's central and southern Sunni majority provinces and has fought harshly against ISIS-Yemen for attempting to control its strongholds in Badya province (Raghavan, 2019). The Islamist insurgency in Yemen is primarily a localized phenomenon, and it appears as if Al-Qaeda has — as a matter of strategy — carefully managed to blend itself.

Al-Qaeda's Rationale

The question arises on the rationale behind such an approach of Al-Qaeda since it is not a local Islamist movement or not the one ideologically believing in nationalism, local cultures, norms, and self-governance related local issues. Al-Qaeda's shift in approach may be derived from the issues it continues to face. Al-Qaeda surprised US with 9/11 terrorist strikes, but US responded with a greater surprise through mobilizing all its resources and allies to destroy Al-Qaeda's infrastructure, hideouts, safe-havens, and arresting hundreds of high-value leaders in many countries. The US Special Forces also killed several high-profile leaders of Al-Qaeda (including Bin Laden) in drone strikes and Special Forces' operations carried out across three continents. Amid this scenario of a continuous onslaught and loss of experienced cadre of Islamist militants, the best possible strategy was to survive and salvage what remains. Though it is against Al-Qaeda's ideological nature, it appears as if there was no other resort except to survive with a strategic shift. Hence, Dr. Zawahiri, despite his uncharismatic personality and earlier tactical blunders (split of Al-Qaeda in Iraq and later in Syria), has somehow managed to steer Al-Qaeda through difficult waters and can strengthen it further with the new strategy in place.

However, a more immense loss to Al-Qaeda — than the loss of seasoned cadre — was split. The Al-Qaeda in Iraq (also known as Al-Qaeda in the Land of Two Rivers) was the most active Al-Qaeda affiliate that fought against the US forces in Iraq and inflicted heavy losses to the US troops, with thousands of casualties including over 4000 fatalities. The affiliate broke away from Al-Qaeda Central after Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's death in a US airstrike near Baghdad in 2006. Though the organization lost its momentum after Zarqawi, the Syrian conflict benefitted in its regrouping and the Iraq franchise provided leadership and cadre to the newly opened Syrian franchise — the Nusra Front. Al-Julani was initially a commander of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, but al-Baghdadi sent him to Syria to launch an Al-Qaeda affiliate there because of his Syrian descent. Later, the Baghdadi-Julani rift led to the breaking up of the organization. Contrary to Zawahiri's assessment, the Baghdadi-led ISIS gained more ground, recruits, and captured more weapons in Syria and later in Iraq to proclaim itself as a state and a potent competitor to Al-Qaeda.

Another issue faced by Al-Qaeda pertains to the control over territories from where it can train and equip its recruits, and plan and execute its operations. The 9/11 terrorist strikes and the subsequent US invasion of Afghanistan (Global War on Terrorism and Operation Enduring Freedom) resulted in the loss of Al-Qaeda's base in Afghanistan. However, with the transformed strategy of forging ties with local groups, Al-Qaeda has managed to develop several operating bases in Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Somalia and West Africa and is expected to progress further.

Recapping Al-Qaeda's Approach

The cornerstone of current Al-Qaeda's strategy is apparently based upon certain parameters which may be termed as Al-Qaeda's long game of glocalization and survival. Al-Qaeda capitalized on the rise of ISIS and availed this opportunity to its own benefit; during the heydays of ISIS, it remained out of sight and quietly started rebuilding itself without competing with them. The organization is presently not focusing much on carrying out international terrorist attacks (with certain exceptions such as the Pensacola terrorist attack); instead, it is working with local groups without antagonizing local customs, norms, values and culture (as it had done in the case of Iraq, resulting in Sahwa Movement in 2006-7). Unlike its previous endeavors to internationalize its cause and ideology, the terrorist entity stays low and gains fewer media coverage ever. Above all, Al-Qaeda is making inroads in ungoverned spaces available in weak, failing, or civil war-ravaged countries like Afghanistan, Syria, Burkina Faso, Mali, Yemen, and Syria. Its most recent attempt to expand itself in Mali has been brought to the spotlight by killing AQIM's Emir Abdul Malik Droudkel by the French force in June 2020. The situation depicts that Droudkel, an Algerian national who reportedly was also working with Ansare Dine in West Africa, had been able to find safe havens in Mali while developing rapport with Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM). Therefore, it is concluded that Al-Qaeda has adopted similar tactics in geographical regions ranging from Africa to Asia — allowing itself to grow and expand surreptitiously.

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