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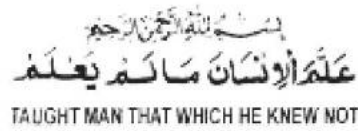
MARGALLA

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A Journal of International Affairs



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Talha Malik

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LAOZI'S PHILOSOPHY: ITS COMPARISON WITH WESTERN THOUGHTS AND APPLICATION ON PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN RELATIONS

Zahid Latif Mirza*

Abstract

The complex Pakistan-Afghanistan relations always engage policymakers on both sides of the border. Their concerns towards each other have been changing the socio-political environment intermittently due to internal and external dynamics coupled with historical legacies. This study, therefore, covers the post-independence period, the Soviet Union's communist influence in Afghanistan, the rise of the Taliban, and the post-9/11 era. It employs Lao Tzu's philosophy which advocates the overarching features of domestic politics, global governance, and statecraft to address the prevailing intricacies in Pakistan and Afghanistan foreign policies. It discusses vital concepts and approaches of softness, normalness, and actionless action at the individual, state, and system levels while carving out institutionalized foreign policy orientations between the two neighbours. The paper also considers the western thought of realism paradigm through which peace in the region remained elusive. It deliberates upon Lao Tzu's philosophy which lays down the foundation of the political order in a natural, peaceful and balanced way.

Keywords: Lao Tzu's Philosophy, Pak-Afghan Relations, Foreign Policy, Governance, Statecraft.

Introduction

Foreign policy of a country is neither exclusive nor a linear undertaking. Some variables directly influence national policies, such as geography, demography, economy, environment, and the practice of statecraft. South Asia, a volatile region suffering from perpetual conflicts primarily attributed to Pakistan-India animosity and evolving Afghanistan dynamics, exacerbates policymakers' challenges. In the Pakistan-Afghanistan context, a peaceful and stable Afghanistan is in Pakistan's interest. Historically, Pakistan-Afghanistan relations have remained fluctuating. Lord Curzon (a former Viceroy of India) stated that "frontiers are indeed the razor's edge on which hang suspended the modern issues of war or peace, of life or death to nations."¹ Post-1979, Afghan *Mujahedeen* waged war against Soviet invasion with the support of the US, and Pakistan eventually forced Red Army to leave Afghanistan. After the defeat of the Cold War opponent, the US left Afghanistan in disarray, but Pakistan continued its efforts to stabilize Afghanistan. Following the 9/11 incident, Pakistan acceded to the US demands,

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thus, paid a heavy price. After the Taliban's control over Afghanistan, it is still grappling with foreign policy challenges with a murky and hazy future that lays ahead.

So far, most of the available literature on Pakistan-Afghanistan relations emanates from Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Europe, and the US, offering limited avenues of thinking. This paper, therefore, is an effort towards understanding the complexity of Pakistan-Afghanistan relations from the writings of ancient and famous Chinese Philosopher Lao Tzu (also known as Laozi). Laozi's influence on Chinese thinking is overarching, including domestic politics, global governance, and the practice of statecraft. It provides a theoretical lens to carve out some fresh thoughts on the subject. This paper analyses the relevance of Laozi's philosophy to Pakistan-Afghanistan relations during formative years, Pakistan's Afghan Policy during Soviet invasion, Taliban rule (1996-2001), post-9/11 changes, and its application to foreign policy analysis and comparison with western thinking.

Theoretical Lens of Laozi's Philosophy

Sima Qian's writings indicate that Laozi was an elder contemporary of Confucius (581-500 BC). Laozi authored "Dao De Jing," a masterpiece of philosophy, comprehensively encompassing the Universe, human life, and politics.² This book is colloquially known as Laozi's little book of 5000 words, a highly condensed Chinese ancient thought.³

a) Dao (The Way)

The overarching concept of "Dao De Jing" is *Dao* or *Tao*, having literal meanings 'the Way.' Explaining *Dao* is complex and intricate, though it is wholesome as a concept. It is the process of reality, how various things come together. Ontologically, *Dao* is fathomless, invisible in shape, and all-embracing. It exerts energy by existing in nothingness and is dynamic in nature and a generative principle of the Universe. Laozi explains this as "the *Tao* which can be expressed in words, is not the eternal *Tao*."⁴ "The Way is like an empty vessel that may be drawn from without ever needing to be filled. It is bottomless...."⁵ The spirit of *Dao* can also be compared with a river flowing through a valley, "the valley spirit never dies."⁶ Laozi also gives a unique explanation of *Dao* through the concept of reversion. "In *Tao*, the only motion is returning; The only useful quality, weakness."⁷ It is also worth mentioning that *Dao* advocates actionless completion characterized by no intrusiveness and domination. The "*Tao* always remains inactive, yet it acts upon everything in the world."⁸ *Dao* being metaphysical for understanding relies on subjective ontology. Therefore, *Dao* explains the phenomenon of nature and the Universe's dynamics or may call it mother nature. It needs to be perceived in time and space as regulating cosmic mechanisms for understanding some of its fundamental notions. Metaphorically, it shall be deciphered and appropriately interpreted to apply to the Pakistan-Afghanistan relationship.

b) *Wu Wei (Actionless Action)*

Wu Wei has a central place in Laozi's philosophy. Relating with *Dao* means following the natural flow and order of Cosmos and nature's rhythm. Thus, *Wu Wei* is a means to an end. As a system of governance or guidance for the policymakers, the concept sounds paradoxical that something positive or concrete can be achieved by inaction. In a philosophical sense, *Wu Wei* advocates that a predominantly kinetic approach in handling challenges violates the law of nature and negatively impacts society and people. The actionless activity follows the way of nature like water. Laozi advocated that man takes the earth as a model; earth takes heaven as its model..., *Dao* takes what is natural.⁹

Wu Wei is a goodness and virtuous way of conduct. Various segments of society act like flowing water, moving as per the downstream natural flow, cleaning what is dirty, and nurturing and nourishing the needy. Indeed, a harmonious society and its members can act positively without any centralized directions by ruling classes. Laozi's further explained that "he who is good at speaking leaves no slips; he who is good at counting uses no counting tools; he who is good at shutting renders all efforts of opening in vain though he uses no bolts; [and] he who is good at tying renders all efforts of untying in vain though he uses no ropes."¹⁰

The concept of *Wu Wei* can be aptly applied in the evolving situation of Afghanistan and how to bring peace and harmony in a war-torn country, a warring society, and by implication, not to support a competing group over the other as it disharmonizes the community. "Those who want to obtain it by force will ruin it; those who hold it by force will lose it. Thus, the sage never ruins it because of his inaction."¹¹ From these quoted references, rulers of Laozi do not follow any act of coercive law but still follow the principles that come from *Dao*.¹²

Laozi maintains that a peaceful society reflects harmony within its various segments. Unrealistic ambitions and unnecessary desires create social and societal ills. The application of force is the act of unnaturalness (anti-*Ziran*) that ultimately takes societies towards conflict and destruction. Afghanistan is a case in point. In the context of statecraft, anti-*Ziran* is not close to nature. It is the state of naturalness defined by harmony. This state of naturalness is the central theme for a peaceful human world. "Heping in Chinese is a combination of 'he' (means harmony) and 'ping' (means balance),"¹³ indicating a wholesome view of peace. *Ziran* (naturalness) is, thus, linked with *Wu Wei* (Actionless Action). *Ziran* is the core value of the thought of Laozi, while *Wu Wei* is the principle or method of realising this value in action.¹⁴

c) *Rou (Softness)*

Laozi advocates that "the more weapons the people own, the more chaotic the state is."¹⁵ His thought still holds good for the case study of Afghanistan. *Rou* (softness) is a function of *Dao* advocating superiority of weakness over strength. *Rou* is a multifaceted concept applied in all spheres of life, society, and the state. Drawing an

example from nature and using water as a metaphor, Laozi explains that nothing is softer and weaker than water; still, amazingly, water can penetrate the hardest and strongest structures. More peaceful approaches resembling water provide a model to follow while dealing with Afghan imbroglio by not following the realist paradigm of international relations but the neo-liberalist school of thought where people are more critical, and thus, a shift from high to low politics. In Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, Laozi's philosophical considerations need study and deliberation.

Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations (1947-1979)

In September 1947, Afghanistan became the only country to oppose Pakistan's entry into the UN. Following a few border skirmishes in 1949, the Afghan *Loya Jirga* adopted a resolution unilaterally repudiating all 19th-century treaties with British India, including the Durand Line agreement. In 1951, the assassination of Pakistan Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan by Said Akbar Babrak, an Afghan citizen, jolted Pak-Afghan ties.¹⁶ In 1954-55, Pakistan entered the anti-Soviet South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and Baghdad Pact (SENTO). Both pacts included a military aid package to Pakistan, which Afghanistan and India protested.¹⁷ In the same sequence of events, Afghanistan signed for a Soviet assistance package a month later.¹⁸ Bilateral relations worsened; however, conflict was averted. Meanwhile, Pakistan banned Afghanistan trade via Karachi port, which led to Afghanistan's open support of tribal incursions inside Pakistan. Afghanistan reoriented its trade by using the Central Asian states of the former USSR.

Similarly, Pakistan's announcement of One Unit met anger inside Afghanistan. An angry mob ransacked the Pakistan embassy in Kabul and consulate in Jalalabad while police looked on.¹⁹ The event resulted in border escalation, Afghanistan mobilized 70,000 troops, and the inter-state border remained closed for five months.²⁰ Following US mediation between Pakistan and Afghanistan and concerns that the US might attempt to induct Afghanistan into CENTO, the USSR openly supported *Pashtunistan*.²¹ In response, Field Marshal Ayub Khan followed an aggressive foreign policy²² and even threatened to attack Afghanistan.²³ In 1960, over a thousand Afghan soldiers disguised as Pashtun nomads and tribespeople infiltrated the Bajaur Agency (Pakistan's frontier tribal areas); however, they were repelled by pro-Pakistan tribesmen. It followed two separate and more significant incursions (1961) supported by Afghan troops. Pakistan-Afghanistan border was closed, while Sardar Muhammad Daud Khan stated that it would remain closed until the *Pashtunistan* issue had been resolved. He successfully ousted the King, abolished the monarchy, and turned Afghanistan into the Islamic Republic in 1973. The main charge framed against the exiled King was his failure to exploit Pakistan's position of weakness after its defeat in East Pakistan for materializing the cause of *Pashtunistan*.²⁴ The USSR immediately recognized pro-Soviet Daud's government. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, then Prime Minister of Pakistan, also recognized the new Afghan government to improve relations with Afghanistan. Daud set aside Bhutto's diplomatic initiative, revived old enmity, and resumed Afghanistan's interference in Pakistan by sheltering and training Baloch insurgents.²⁵

Pakistan predicated its Afghan policy, focussing on reducing the threat from a hostile Afghanistan to avoid a two-front hostility from eastern and western neighbours. Considerations of survivability mainly drove Pakistan's Afghan policy during this era. The goodwill and benevolence of Pakistan's approach could not reciprocate from Afghan ruling elites. Pakistan failed to realise that instead of focusing on Afghan political elites, commonalities between two countries be utilized through institutionalised means and strengthening multiple channels linking two societies, a softer approach to building friendly relations as advocated by Laozi through *Dao* (the Way) and *Wu Wei* (Actionless Action).

Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations (1979-1994)

People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan's (PDPA) infighting for power struggle coupled with covert US support to anti-communist regime forced USSR invasion of Afghanistan.²⁶ Under a well-orchestrated strategy of embroiling the Soviet Union into a Vietnam-like situation in Afghanistan, the US assisted anti-communist factions despite the calculation that it would induce a Soviet military response.²⁷ Jimmy Carter declared the Soviet invasion as "the most serious threat to peace since the Second World War"²⁸ and sought Pakistan's assistance for saving Afghanistan from becoming the next domino. Despite some internal disagreement in President Zia's cabinet and declining initial financial aid (\$400 million) from the US, Pakistan finally decided to become a frontline state in the US-led war for freedom and democracy in Afghanistan with financial assistance worth \$3.2 billion over six years.²⁹ Pakistan took advantage of its geostrategic location without paying adequate attention to essential aspects, such as the effects of arming and training religious zealots with lost entities and diverse motives on the post-conflict settlement of Afghanistan; long-term effects of the presence of large-scale trained and armed radical outfits on security and stability of Pakistan; and possibilities and consequences of outsourcing state's monopoly on the use of violence and plans for repatriation or rehabilitation of such activists.

Pakistan supported the resistance against the USSR in Afghanistan. It allowed thousands of *Mujahideen* to organize, train, equip and undertake attacks on soviet forces in Afghanistan from its soil.³⁰ The long war gave rise to *madrasahs* (religious seminaries) for indoctrinating and recruiting holy warriors based on vicious sectarian fissures.³¹ With over a million civilians who died during the Soviet invasion and the world's largest displaced population,³² fragmented Afghanistan could not find sustainable peace. The Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, but the communist-supported regime kept ruling Afghanistan till 1992. After the overthrow of Dr. Najibullah, Sibgat Ullah Mujadedi, a mutually agreed commander of Afghan *mujahideen*, took over the interim government as a follow-up of the Peshawar Accord. Power struggle amongst *mujahideen* groups did not end. In the following years, the civil war got unleashed, whereby broadly ethnically divided factions fought for personal influence and inflicted unimaginable suffering on the people of Afghanistan. Using religion as a tool of politics and arming the population is what in Laozi's philosophy is against the concept of *Ziran*

(Naturalness) and can only give short-lived solutions. Thus, peace remained elusive for Afghans with another cycle of violence and the rise of the Taliban in 1994.

Rise of the Taliban and Pakistan's Connection (1994–2001)

President Burhanuddin Rabbani and his defence minister Ahmad Shah Masoud being Tajiks was the beginning of the rise of Tajiks in Afghanistan after overthrowing President Najibullah's government. Pashtuns never felt at ease with this power arrangement in Kabul. "For them, it amounted to a gathering storm of northerners."³³ Pakistan's support to Gulbadin Hekmatyar and his Hizb-e-Islami party to force a Pashtun-dominated solution on Afghanistan added further bloodshed, internal friction, and intensified civil war. Consequently, power brokers' localised control through the barrels of guns forced people to find safety and security in ethnic or religious identities. Some leaders with sanity and having a moderate view of managing Afghan affairs like Sibghatullah Mujaddedi and Syed Ahmed Gailani were almost discarded.³⁴ In a country ripped apart by intra-state conflict and internecine struggle spread over more than a decade, the rise of the Taliban was a natural phenomenon. The decision to launch the Taliban movement was taken at a meeting in a mosque in 1994.³⁵ Mullah Omar, the founding father of the Taliban movement, took over the leadership of this movement. Taliban movement became a strategic opportunity and a marriage of convenience.³⁶ As an expression of support to the Taliban regime, Pakistan gave diplomatic recognition to facilitate its image globally by recognising the Taliban's government as legitimate.³⁷

By the end of 1996, the international environment turned against the Taliban. Still, Pakistan supported them until 9/11, when it was forced to change its policy under international compulsions and US pressure. As the new realities started taking shape in the region, Pakistan's support to the Taliban proved counter-productive and negatively impacted its image. From the perspective of Laozi's philosophy, it was far away from *Dao* (the Way), *Wu Wei* (Actionless Action), and *Ziran* (Naturalness).

Pakistan's Post-9/11 Afghan Policy

In the aftermath of 9/11, Pakistan's pro-Taliban policy towards Afghanistan radically changed and supported US policy objectives. According to the 9/11 Commission Report, the then US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, announced at the beginning of the National Security Council (NSC) meeting that "Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf had agreed to US request for support in the War on Terrorism."³⁸ It severed years-long Pakistan's ties with the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. After the initial dust of 9/11 settled and the Taliban government was ousted, India supported the Northern Alliance, and the US kept their elevation to power corridors. "Islamabad interpreted this as an American duplicity, and henceforth had to look after its interests more carefully and not trust anyone."³⁹ Pakistan was rightly concerned about India's growing multidimensional activities on its western border. Afghanistan's strategic partnership with India further increased Pakistan's concerns that it was getting

marginalized, and India was unleashing terrorism against Pakistan with the support of the Afghan government.

With every passing year, the complexity of Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan compounded further. In a true sense, Pakistan was pitched against the US and India in Afghanistan. On the other side, the US administration had reservations about Pakistan's role in Afghanistan. This mistrust continued, and President Trump blamed Pakistan in the most undiplomatic manner, making it responsible for the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan. The US National Security Strategy-2017 further endorsed that the US had "committed to supporting the Afghan government and security forces in their fight against the Taliban ... [and] that Pakistan to take decisive action against militant organizations operating from its soil."⁴⁰ Trump administration also called for an increased role for India in Afghanistan. In response to US policy, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, reiterated that "Pakistan cannot bring Afghan war into Pakistan."⁴¹ Pakistan has already cleared its areas indiscriminately and taken border security measures, including fencing.⁴² During a meeting with US Ambassador to Pakistan David Hale, General Bajwa also stated that "we are not looking for any material or financial assistance but trust, understanding, and acknowledgment of our contributions.... We have done a lot towards achieving peace in Afghanistan and shall keep on doing our best, not to appease anyone but in line with our national interest and national policy."⁴³

Post-9/11, international efforts in Afghanistan remained riveted on serving the US, and its coalition partners' interests mostly ignored regional sensitivities and ground realities. Pakistan had to manage its national security, and it led to a paradox, which instead of giving it a positive space in Afghan polity and people, created suspicion and distrust. Furthermore, despite massive and successful military efforts to stabilize Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan, the reconciliation process remained suspicious. It was magnified due to US and Indian influence on the Afghan political and security establishment. Pakistan needs to have a fresh approach that can address mistrust and misperceptions. Few leaves from Laozi's tenets of statecraft can handle it through a softer and more balanced approach.

Despite being an ally and its enormous sacrifices in the war against terror, continuous attempts were made by the US to coerce Pakistan. It violated the sovereignty of Pakistan on many occasions.⁴⁴ Some critical incursions were the Osama Bin Laden raid in Abbottabad in May 2011 and the Salala Check Post attack on November 26, 2011, leading to the *shahadat* of 26 Pakistani soldiers, including an officer. Pakistan strongly reacted, and US-led coalition forces were denied ground supply routes to Afghanistan for over six months. The attack on Army Public School, Peshawar in December 2014, Bacha Khan University in Charsada in January 2016, and Balochistan Police Training College in Quetta in October 2016 were also planned in Afghanistan.⁴⁵ Despite repeated Pakistani requests and detailed exchange of intelligence, the US and Afghanistan failed to bring perpetrators of all such attacks to justice. This mistrust and lack of cooperative relationship with the US and Afghan government continued with no end in sight.

The rapidly evolving environment witnessed a US peace deal signed with the Taliban in February 2020, which profoundly impacted the Afghan security landscape, but failed to make a successful headway. The decision to pull out US-led coalition forces from Afghanistan marked the completion of the second decade of the US longest war. The rapid collapse of the Afghan government and its security apparatus resulted in the occupation of Kabul by the Taliban on August 15, 2021. It was followed by a hectic evacuation of US and other diplomatic missions from Afghanistan coupled with the mass exodus of international aid agencies and some Afghans, reflecting the uncertainties ahead. These evolving situations may have serious repercussions, particularly for Pakistan, the region, and the whole world. No country globally has recognised the Taliban's government so far, and the evolving dynamics do not hold strong prospects for sustainable peace in Afghanistan.

Pakistan is back at the same crossroads where it was in the early 1990s; hence, the question remains, what should be done in terms of policy reorientation. Pakistan's strategic thinking seeks a friendly or the least neutral Afghanistan. It is likely to remain an unachievable policy end in the face of competing and conflicting interests of global and regional players coupled with internal dynamics of Afghanistan, especially the rentier nature of the Afghan state vis-à-vis the limited ability of Pakistan to mould behaviour of Afghanistan's domestic players. The Taliban, now in power, are likely to have a realist foreign policy outlook.

Pakistan's Afghan policy needs to exploit natural and social determinants and geography to build positivity and goodwill among Afghan people through trade and requisite support in other spheres of life. The overall construct of policy is needed to be moulded by getting lead from Laozi's tenets of statecraft where people are centric. It serves millions of Afghans who live along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border by alleviating their miseries and supporting their basic needs through enhanced interdependence and massive facilitation in trade and other multiple spheres. Thus, it is a softer approach to an Afghan policy which is key to Laozi's strategic thinking. These guiding parameters were elusive in the past, and Pakistan focused on those instruments of policy, which could not shape a friendly Afghanistan and were beyond its power potential.

Application of Laozi's Philosophy on Pak-Afghan Relations

Rule the state with peace and inaction; governing the world by not troubling the people.⁴⁶
(Laozi)

Foreign policy analysis focuses on relations between different actors, primarily states in the international system. At the heart of the field is an investigation into the decision-making at various tiers, i.e., individual level, state level, and system level, involving processes and conditions that affect foreign policy choices. By this approach, foreign policy analysis is necessarily concerned with the boundaries between external and domestic environments. A study of Pakistan's Afghan policy applying Laozi's philosophy adds fresh thoughts to Pakistan's four-decades-old thinking on Afghanistan.

Moreover, the application of this philosophical perspective may assist in understanding some of the critical questions that why despite all the sacrifices made by Pakistan, including hosting millions of refugees, it could not develop friendly relations with Afghanistan. Why has there always been mistrust between the two states, and why the international community does not fully recognise Pakistan's efforts to facilitate peace in Afghanistan.

States engage in foreign policy behaviours, and the interaction between states in the international system yields outcomes.⁴⁷ Multiple levels of analysis are used corresponding to different foci of foreign policy; individuals make decisions, thus shaping the course of history because their choices and decisions derive the course of events. Their personalities and perceptions matter and how they make sense of the world.

Laozi's Philosophical Approach at Individual Level

Rou means softness; therefore, Laozi's approach to *Rou* can transform bilateral conflictual relationships positively, especially in the Pakistan-Afghanistan context. *Rou*, for its application, can be metaphorically associated with water, thus equating it with softness. Conceptually, it is strength through softness. Based on the concept of softness, a general understanding of statecraft can subdue the strong and stiff. Water tends to flow to low places following a natural course. Water gains strength as small tributaries and streams converge downstream and make a bigger whole, overcoming any resistance or obstacle. By adopting an approach of inclusiveness, leadership in both countries can create common grounds, equated with the concept (*Rou*) of strength through softness.

In the Pakistan-Afghanistan context, the leadership preferred the use of force, thus using strength against others' weakness (one ethnic group against the other – atrocities against Hazaras or Pashtuns versus Tajiks). Unbridled and violent use of non-state actors resulted in decades of fighting and bloodshed with no end in sight. Excessive use of force by strong ethnic communities against weak and marginalized elements has gradually created deep fragmentation in Afghan society. Thus, this phenomenon of using non-state actors (strength used against weakness) has proved fatal for Afghanistan and its people. With the Taliban's control of Afghanistan, this approach is still visible with the dominance of a single group. If used by the leadership, *Rou* (softness) as a foreign policy notion can create common grounds based on *Ziran* (naturalness) for laying the foundation of sustainable peace, which looks elusive even today.

Laozi's Philosophical Approach at State Level

This level of analysis explains how leaders are embedded in government institutions. It focuses on internal factors that compel a state to engage in specific foreign policy behaviour. Post-9/11, US clout, Indian factor, domestic violence, and economic weakness influenced Pakistan's Afghan policy. Moreover, safeguarding Kashmir's cause and preventing Pakistan from being declared as a terrorist state were

other significant preoccupations. Through a partially compliant Afghan policy, Pakistan managed its ties with the US avoiding its retribution, gaining legitimacy for President Musharraf's regime, and projecting itself as a responsible state.

From the perspective of Laozi, how could Pakistan have handled the Afghan challenge; he advocates that "the small state can gain the trust of large one by taking the lower position, the case being either the former or vice versa.... After all, the large state should be more willing to take the lower position."⁴⁸ At the state level, Laozi's thinking is different from the prevailing realist approach to zero-sum politics of balance of power and power maximization. *Rou* (softness), like the water metaphor, can be employed peacefully to manage state affairs. The state needs to be benevolent by extending support and facilitating in all possible domains. It is like water accumulating in a lower place. Water has enormous potential in unifying in quantity due to its fluidity and softness. Water in streams and rivers flowing through valleys stays lower than mountains. A powerful state is like water with an accumulating downstream flow. Laozi's philosophy indicates that harmonious policies and benevolence in interstate relations are more important than coerciveness. Thus, non-coercive and balanced state policies equate with strength through softness.

The concept of *Rou*, in the Pakistan-Afghanistan context, remained unattended. Historically, when Pakistan emerged on the global map in 1947, Afghanistan, a well-established state with historical, ethnic, and religious affinity and bondage, became the only country to oppose Pakistan's entry into the UN. After that, it supported the separatist movement in the Pashtun border areas of Pakistan. Mistrust grew with every passing decade. When in a position of strength, Pakistan supported certain factions of Afghanistan in fighting against the Soviet Army with the help of the US and Middle Eastern countries. It alienated large segments of Afghan society, which thought that Pakistan had taken sides with the US against Afghanistan. Both sides in their bilateral relations used different instruments and external support when they were in a position of strength, though either forced by evolving environment or as an opportunity, displaying a lack of long-term vision. Similarly, after 9/11, Pakistan supported the US onslaught, thus siding the strong against the weak contrary to Laozi's dictum. Where two countries stand today, mistrust and hatred deep inside people on both sides is an example of high-handed policies, thus contrary to Laozi's notion of *Rou*.

Laozi's Philosophical Approach at System Level

During the Cold War, the US and USSR developed their respective sphere of influence. Afghanistan was under Soviet influence, and Pakistan became an ally of the US and an active member of US security alliances. After the disintegration of the USSR, Pakistan remained under US influence, being the sole superpower. Pakistan's policy, after 1979, was mainly crafted with the priority of supporting US interests. Pakistan's post-9/11 Afghan policy was also marred with contradictions and continuous endeavours to remain relevant in an anti-Taliban international environment. Thus, Pakistan's Afghan policy generally remained anchored around the US despite detrimental to its

national interest. From the perspective of world politics, realism is a dominant theory of the international system. It provides a powerful explanation for the state of war, a common condition of life in the international system.⁴⁹ Globalization and other global trends are challenging the Westphalian state system, but power struggle remains a constant of international politics; thus, states tend to maximize their power due to prevalent anarchy. Faced by challenges of geography and unsettled disputes in the regional context, Pakistan was forced due to its external challenges to align itself with the US during a bipolar and unipolar world and had to pay a heavy price. Its current challenges, including Afghanistan and terrorism, are a by-product of its legacy and the international system.

The Chinese concept of *Tianxia* (天下) encapsulates a world theory, 'all under the heaven.' Laozi's idea of *Dao* coupled with *Tianxia* gives it a wholesome meaning. Chinese political philosophy focuses on turning an enemy into a friend,⁵⁰ thus losing the sense of enemy, leading to conflict transformation. Laozi concludes that "a king could rule a state by his orders, win a war by strategies, but let enjoy 'all under heaven' by doing nothing to decrease the freedom and to deny the interest of people."⁵¹ Moreover, Chinese political philosophy defines a political order in which the world (peace) is primary, whereas the state (conflictual relationship in a lawless world) is primary in western philosophy.⁵² All under the heaven concept, with Laozi's *Dao* (the Way) as pivotal to it, is focused on creating a unified system based on peaceful world order. This serene view of the world is much loftier than the Westphalian system in which conflict and war are inherent. The current international theory is based on the state system, where states struggle for power as a zero-sum game having divergence of interest, keep aligning and realigning themselves. Thus, peace remains elusive for mankind. Pakistan-Afghanistan relationship is a classic example of these ongoing conflictual relations amongst states, therefore, need re-thinking.

Conclusion

Afghanistan has consistently been one of Pakistan's most complex foreign policy challenges. There are no run-of-the-mill and straightforward solutions. Geopolitical, geoeconomic, and security challenges emanating from Afghanistan can only be mitigated through a wholesome, softer, and benevolent approach, unlike viewing everything from a single prism as per the legacy. On the geopolitical ground, management of international and domestic perceptions about Pakistan's positive role for peace, stability, and reconciliation without playing favourites is closer to Laozi's concept of *Dao* (the Way), *Rou* (softness), and *Ziran* (naturalness). It is heartening to see that Pakistan's current approach supports an all-inclusive Afghan government in line with international norms. Our focus should be on a friendly and peaceful Afghanistan, supported in socio-economic domains. Cultivating people-to-people contact through multiple and institutionalised channels should have a pivotal place. Linking both states and society through institutional means can lead to sustainable peace for the region.

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THE RISE OF THE FIFTH WAVE OF GLOBAL TERRORISM (ISLAMOPHOBIA)

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Abstract

Post-9/11 framing of Islam in western intelligentsia and policymakers have given birth to a new way of global terrorism, i.e., Islamophobia, revolving around unfounded fear of Islam. Islamophobia is an internationally driven predominant energy – hatred against Muslims – which continues to shape the character of this new wave and relations among the perpetrators belonging to various parts of the world. Politically-driven framing of Muslims, Islam and one of its key tenants – Jihad – by the western media has heralded transnational terrorism (the Fifth Wave of terrorism), which fulfils all the essential prerequisites. Therefore, the theoretical framework of this paper peeps through the Four Waves Theory of modern terrorism put forth by David Rapoport to examine whether the current rise of Islamophobic violence in different parts of the world qualifies to be the Fifth Global Wave of terrorism. The paper delineates how Muslims have been discriminated against and demonized worldwide. It also unfolds how religious-linked terrorism has been exploited, resulting in Islamophobia, which has turned into a transcultural and transnational threat.

Keywords: Islamophobia, Four Waves Theory, Terrorism, Extremism, Islam.

Introduction

The phenomenon of terrorism has become one of the most dangerous embodiments in contemporary times that produces hazardous socio-political activities inducing consistent negative emotions with a scary display. It constitutes religious-political subjects; correspondingly, it is considered a cultural taboo that became a myth and an object that prompts fear and hatred. Over the past few years, terrorism has caused severe damages worldwide due to its transcultural and transnational characteristics. It has been discussed in different forms and types in literature for a long time. Various authors have contributed literature on different religions as it remained an area of interest for many. However, after the 9/11 incident, the interest in studying religion-based ideologies fuelling terrorism and violent extremism has been renewed.

In his book titled “Not in God’s Name,” Jonathan Sacks argues that religion has been used as a tool to fuel extremism and violence.¹ Sathianathan Clarke’s book titled “Competing Fundamentalisms: Violent Extremism in Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism” also provides insights about extremist religious organizations.² It provokes

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thoughts on further exploring the genesis and origins of religious extremist violence and ideologies. Several books have also been written on religious militancy by western authors. Some adequately describe various militant organizations and their motives, while others explain their doctrines. The works of Raymond William and Jon Witt sufficiently explain the importance of ideology in stimulating a movement. Some Pakistani writers like Dr. Sheharyar Khan and Irshad Hussain have funnelled down the focus of their work to religious doctrine and narratives in their articles titled “Counter Terrorism: The War of Narratives” and “Ideology or Religion,” respectively.³ All these works provide new dimensions in understanding extremist religious ideologies and thoughts.

David C. Rapoport, in his article “The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism,” has explained various motivations and ideologies rooted in the perusal of terrorism and violence by multiple organizations. He constructed a model of four waves to simplify this complex phenomenon. Each wave of terrorism in Rapoport’s model depicted a specific timeframe and ideologies associated with it.⁴ The first wave of terrorism can be attributed to anarchists, who remained involved in violent and terrorist acts from the 19th to 20th century. The second wave of terrorism followed the emergence of anti-colonial and nationalist movements. Ideological terrorism during the 1960s and 1970s made up the third wave of terrorism. While the fourth wave of terrorism was religiously-motivated terrorism, according to Rapoport, starting with the wake of 1979 and continuing to date. Each wave, according to Rapoport, lasts for a generation, roughly 25 to 40 years on average.

Todd H. Green traces the history from medieval times to locate the origin of hatred against Islam in his book titled “The Fear of Islam: An Introduction to Islamophobia in the West.” He highlights the prevailing illogical fear of Islam in the West. Salman Sayyid’s book titled “Thinking through Islamophobia: Global Perspectives” also deals with the origins of Islamophobia and endeavours to define it and relate it with Orientalism and racism. Scholars are also writing various articles to bring the phenomenon of Islamophobia to light. A few such authors have indicated an impending clash of civilizations behind the phenomenon. While the focus remains towards the West, there has already been a rise in extremism in India. Secondly, there are gaps in formulating a strategic response to this phenomenon, transcending from non-violent extremism to violent extremism and terrorism against communities of Muslims, appearing to emerge as a new wave of global terrorism. Despite these factors, much less work has been done on Islamophobia as a worldwide phenomenon, examined through the prism of transnational and transcultural terrorism.

Islamophobia, as an extension of contemporary terrorism, is possibly discussed in the backdrop of evolving trends of extremism. Today, the non-aggressive social constructs have become belligerent and violent, with religion turning into a phobia. Exclusivity is becoming a global trend, and humanity gets detached into contesting groups and factions. It is, therefore, imperative to analyse Islamophobia as a social construct and evaluate its future direction, the primary focus of this paper. It unfolds

social construct and ideological underpinnings behind terrorism and extremism while employing David Rapoport's 'Four Waves Theory' as a conceptual framework, analyzing through critical terrorism prism to build the rationale for an emerging wave of transnational and transcultural terrorism, i.e., Islamophobia. It is different from previous waves, but the consequential tides have one commonality in violence.

Islamophobia – A Social Construct

Ideology is a complex phenomenon that shapes conceptual and social constructs in a historical setting. Ideologies represent and shape the interests of social groups by forming different frameworks. Shepherd et al. quote Eagleton while discussing three concepts related to underpinnings of ideology: the presentation of ideas, values, and beliefs, the operationalization of ideas, values, and moral concepts to promote specific vested interests of a segment as against others, and the interests of the powerful protected through distortion and misrepresentation.⁵ Likewise, Purvis and Hunt (1993) view ideology as a result of stature or orientation held by different groups, classes, and agents of influence within societies. Whereas, Davoudi, using the work of Michael Freeden (1996), declares ideology as the outcome of ideas, values, and beliefs, constructed historically and socially, over vibrant and flexible patterns.

In contrast, Sager (2020) sees the structure of political ideas aimed at political change as ideology.⁶ All these conceptual underpinnings of ideology have one common characteristic, i.e., the association of power with the notion of ideology to bring change. Going further, Donald Holbrook and John Horgan, in their article "Terrorism and Ideology: Cracking the Nut," hold that the question of "what causes terrorism?" has a standard answer – the ideology. They believe that some hostile ideology drives terrorists in the most general sense in carrying out violence.

Linking the two dimensions above, it seems safe to state that ideology is a powerful driver in the social construction of ideas. At the same time, ideology may also motivate a terrorist to initiate acts of violence. Inconsequential terms, the social construct of ideology and associated concepts and ideas generally bring change in society, and the worst form, breed terrorism. In any case, the social construction of ideas seemingly impacts the concepts, interests, values, and behaviour of individuals, segments, and societies. For example, the rise of Islamophobia as an idea and social construct has reflected signs of extremism and violence, resembling terrorist ideologies described in Rapoport's waves of terrorism. Following Rapoport's fourth wave's footsteps, the inception of Islamophobia and its emergence as an idea is a dangerous wave of global terrorism (the Fifth Wave), as it seemingly qualifies all the prerequisites. However, it is pertinent to mention that the Fifth Wave (Islamophobia) differs from the fourth wave in many aspects. Firstly, non-state actors are the spearhead of religiously-motivated violence. Secondly, the fourth wave enforces non-state actors' understanding and interpretation of religion. In comparison, the Fifth Wave drivers are lone wolves charged with hatred and fuelled by policymakers, media, and intelligentsia.

Rapoport has divided modern terrorism into waves, and generational-gap determines wave's lifespan, wherein older generations' dreams and aspirations either become obsolete or lose their appeal to the next generation. A wave has the characteristics of expanding and compressing within a timeframe of 25 years on average. Rapoport has given approximately 40 years as the usual timeframe of a wave and estimates that the prevailing religious tide, which started in 1979, would recede in 2025. He draws this conclusion considering the lifespan of the previous three waves. While the fourth wave continues, the Fifth Wave (Islamophobia) has started ravaging the world. Although it carries the characteristics of social constructivism, the Rapoport theory of Four Waves would be better suited to explain this new phenomenon.

Discrimination against Muslims

There is no universally agreed definition of terrorism. It may be a threat to use violence (a coercive technique) and fear to achieve political or ideological objectives.⁷ Inter-faith and intra-faith animosities date back to pre-historical periods. Sicarii in the 1st century, Catholic-Protestant clash in Northern Ireland, and sectarian rift in the Muslim world show a spectrum of intra-faith violence on extreme ends. The inter-faith violence and hatred can be seen as early as the start of the last millennium in the form of crusaders. While capturing Jerusalem, the crusaders were fortified with extremism, hatred, and violence; thus, they massacred Muslims and Jews in 1099.⁸

It is believed that Islamophobia is a novel term for an old fear. It is one form of religious intolerance with deep roots in hostile ideology, "a theological heresy at the level of morals and practice in the 14th century."⁹ Moreover, in the 15th century, differences between Muslims and non-Muslims mounted like racial resentment towards Islam.¹⁰ Similarly, Muslims in India have faced immense hatred and violence ever since the partition in 1947. Demolition of *Babri Masjid* and massacres of Muslims following the Gujrat riots are all testimony of Hindu abhorrence towards Muslims due to charred history and psychological aspects. This exclusionism becomes more apparent as India drifts from secularism into an abyss of exclusivity due to the *Hindutva* ideology. Hinduism has a different outlook, as described by some of the pundits like M. S. Golwalkar in his books titled "Bunch of Thoughts" and "We or Our Nationhood Defined,"¹¹ and V. D. Savarkar in his works titled "Essentials of Hindutva" (also known as "Hindutva: Who is Hindu?") and "Hindu Rashtra Darshan."¹² Their thoughts, thus, gave rise to an extremist concept of *Hindutva*, being practiced in India under the BJP government.

The violent and non-violent animosity of religion became part of history; however, a new pattern appeared in the wake of the 9/11 incident when suspicion about Islam and Muslims surfaced within the US and Europe and later the rest of the world. To begin with, the US security apparatus and European states kept Muslim communities worldwide under constant surveillance as a potential threat. The official patronage of treating Muslim communities as a nuisance led to fear regarding Islam. Afterwards, a notion of hatred, simmering through a long history, was attached to Muslim

communities. Caleb Iyer Elfenbein analyses Islamophobia in the US as an outcome of 9/11 and the fear against Muslims in the country. His book titled “Fear in Our Hearts: What Islamophobia Tells Us about America” highlights the plight faced by American Muslims.

Similarly, Jorgan Denari Duffner, in her book “Islamophobia: What Christians Should Know (and Do) about Anti-Muslim Discrimination” described the harassment and attacks in the US and many other countries against Muslims. It led to further development of a dichotomy between Good Muslim and Bad Muslim. It complicated and damaged the very basis of Islamic ideology in the minds of Christians, Jews, and other non-Muslims. The hatred caused by exclusionism transformed into a phobia.

A few developments contributed more than anything else to give this social construct an anti-Islamic face – Islamophobia. An executive order by US President Donald Trump restricting travel from Muslim countries was a significant step impacting this new direction. Likewise, incidents of offensive religious-caricatures in France followed by the banning of *hijab* gradually became instrumental in the emergence of Islamophobia as a global phenomenon. The same is occurring in India, where a fascist state subjugates minorities to any extent. Besides, international media and intelligentsia appeared to fuel the fire by following the suit.

To quote an example, in June 2015, Omar Mateen, an Afghan origin US citizen, killed 49 people when he opened fire at a gay nightclub in Orlando. The incident was immediately compared with 9/11 and declared the worst terrorist attack in the US since 9/11. Although different eye-witnesses’ accounts indicated the incident as a hate crime against homosexuals, the US official authorities continue to declare it a terrorist attack by Muslims. The attacker was allegedly a closeted homosexual who frequently went to the club where he carried out the shooting. According to the account by his wife, his family already believed that he was a homosexual. He was an active member of many dating sites dedicated to homosexuals. He was also allegedly incited towards committing a crime due to the possibility of contracting HIV from a Puerto Rican gay. However, the FBI kept a spotlight on the 911 emergency call made by Mateen despite all evidence. The hate crime carried out by Mateen was deliberately labelled as an act of terrorism, despite evidence to the contrary.

On the other hand, in June 2015, Dylann Roof, a white supremacist, opened fire in an Afro-American church, killing nine people. This incident fits all the pre-requisites of terrorism as defined by US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), yet was never treated as an act of terror but rather a hate crime.¹³ The attacker instilled fear amongst the public, received immediate publicity for his cause (white supremacy), targeted a high-profile landmark (oldest Afro-American Church and Civil Rights icon), and a public gathering. This incident was never declared an act of terrorism, despite fulfilling all definitional requirements for an act of terrorism, thus labelled as a hate crime instead.

Muslims face discrimination, suppression, threats, and attacks in many countries around the globe. In India and Palestine, this discrimination and intimidation are supposedly due to unfounded phobia against Muslims due to over-cooked history and detrimental political reasons. European countries' insensitivity towards cultural and religious norms is becoming a new normal. The racial-cultural prejudices against religion are visible in different ways, but the traces of Islam as a threat or threatening the 'other' could only be found in academic literature. In such a stereotype association, Muslims are portrayed as alien and foreign to western society.¹⁴ There is a fear that Islamophobia and anti-Islamic sentiments may convert into a clash of cultures and religions; combining both become a civilization. In the last two centuries, the western world has lived in unfounded fear of anti-Christian sentiment. First, the target of their suspicions were Jews, then Communists and Socialists, and now Muslims. Hollywood movies portrayed communist and socialist characters negatively for a long time. The characters portrayed as Muslims have replaced Hollywood's ruthless, stubborn, and relentless communist and socialist symbols. Even Bollywood is not behind in negatively showing Muslims, driven by anti-Pakistan drive and exclusivity of *Hindutva* ideology. Riz Ahmed, a British actor of Pakistan origin and an Oscar nominee, declared misrepresenting Muslims in the film industry as fuelling Islamophobia and called on to stop it.¹⁵

Nonetheless, the Prime Minister of New Zealand labelled it an act of terrorism when Christ Church terrorist incident occurred. Similarly, the Canadian Prime Minister declared killing a Pakistan-origin Muslim family in Ontario terrorism. Barring these two blatant incidents of terrorism, one hardly comes across the use of the term terrorism against the fiercest acts of violence towards Muslims across the globe. This wilful omission on the part of western governments and the international community warns of a dangerous trend, thus, warrants the Fifth Wave of terrorism as a new social construct.

Religiously-motivated Terrorism

The phenomenon of terrorism has been haunting humankind since time immemorial. History indicates instances of violence carried out in the name of religion; whether Sicarii using 'Sica' to spread terror or the terrorists of 9/11 hijacking the civilian planes and crashing them into Twin Towers and Pentagon or the fear of some terrorists' organizations stealing and smuggling a sub-kilo nuclear weapon into an urban area. The religious struggle (*Jihad*) started in Afghanistan, funded by the US and Saudi Arabia and trained by Pakistan, turned the warring Afghans and other foreign fighters into *Mujahedeen*. The Oval Office welcomed, entertained, and respected them. After the victory of supporting nations and the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the US abandoned the war-torn country into chaos. It left Afghan and foreign fighters alienated, instilled hatred, and motivated them to wage war (terrorist acts) against the US and other countries. The same *Mujahedeen* of the 1980s became terrorists for the US. The US reacted to the 9/11 incident and started a worldwide campaign to counter terrorists.

The 'War on Terror' brought about massive destruction for humanity across the globe destabilized various states and regions, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Middle East. Although some states paid considerably in the form of loss of lives and material, it defaced the outlook of Islam as a religion around the world. In immense measures, Kinetic force was also applied to fight such terrorism. Any violent acts by Muslims became synonymous with terrorism. However, even qualifying terrorist acts by other groups were labelled as mere hate crimes or radicalism. Authors from the West introduced and propagated terminologies, such as Global Jihad, Jihadi, Five Star Jihadi, and Jihadists. They did not realize that in native Muslim languages (Arabic or Urdu), there is no word as Jihadi. The term used for a person waging *Jihad* is *Mujahid* (Holy Warrior). Consequently, the terms like Jihadi used by such ignorant authors to identify and demonize terrorists are motivating. They translate it as *Mujahid* or Holy Warrior to garner more support. Secondly, *Jihad* becomes a sacred obligation once declared by the state, a religious concept that cannot be defeated; writers should understand that it is not like epical stories.

The politically-driven framing of Islam and one of its key tenants – *Jihad* – as narrated by western media has heralded the Fifth Wave of transnational and transcultural terrorism, which fulfils all the essential pre-requisite. Islamophobia is international, driven by a predominant energy – hatred against Muslims – which continues to shape the character of this new global wave and relations among the perpetrators belonging to various parts of the world. As postulated by David Rapoport, this wave is likely to expand and contract in response to global events and their framing by western policymakers and media. If the West continues to 'otherwise' Muslims and Islam on issues, such as refugees' illegitimate invasions of Muslim land, this wave can intensify with an international character.

The most crucial aspect of panacea is that religion-based ideologies and narratives can only be addressed by a superior or more righteous doctrine and history. As violent religious ideologies base themselves on epics and holy texts, the counter-narrative must be constructed using similar sacredness. The deep roots of religious-based ideologically motivated terrorists in heavenly principles make these organizations like Lernaean Hydra – cutting one hand would grow two more. Such terrorist organizations can be defeated using superior ideology and narratives formed on similar principles. Thus, the reaction in the backdrop of religious militancy has resulted in another wave of terrorism, i.e., Islamophobia. Sometimes, responses are limited to benign, like hydrophobia, aerophobia, or claustrophobia, but irrationality remains critical. According to the website of Healthline, "a phobia is an excessive and irrational fear reaction."

Islamophobia is an irrational behaviour against a religion, which has a following of over one billion people across the globe. The irrationality of Islamophobia as a thought and concept lies in attempts at isolating and targeting one-sixth of the world population. Furthermore, suppose it converts into a religiously or racially based ideology, like Hindutva or White Supremacy, transforming into a social construct. The

exclusivism of such a social construct can be detrimental to peace and security, interfaith harmony, global social construct, and the international system. In that case, it can result in anarchy and probably lead to a clash between civilizations. There is a need to shift our gaze from relating terrorism only to Islam and Muslims.

Conclusion

The world is on the verge of entering the next wave, i.e., the Fifth Wave (Islamophobia) that can turn into transnational and transcultural terrorism following the wave theory. This new wave based on the social-ideological construct differs from the previous waves. The communication-led globalized world has become the catalyst for Islamophobia-based terrorism. It is also becoming a dominant and permanent threat to Muslim societies and metastasizing all the nation-states. It demands investigations, more research, and policy directions for national security to effectively counter the Fifth Wave of terrorism by deconstructing the societal construct of terrorism and its linkages while explaining, propagating, and defending the ideological grounds with more clarity.

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FROM INTERVENTION TO EXIT: AN ANALYSIS OF POST-9/11 US STRATEGIES IN AFGHANISTAN

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Abstract

Following the US exit from Afghanistan, the debate revolves around why US intervention in Afghanistan, the longest and one of the most expensive in its history, has failed in defeating the Taliban and realising a durable state-building. The debate considers endogenous factors that explore US and Taliban strategies and exogenous factors that underline the role of regional and extra-regional actors in determining the outcome of the Afghan conflict. This paper, therefore, focuses on faults and inconsistencies within and across US strategies in Afghanistan, i.e., the use of military force, political settlement, and state-building. It also examines US strategies vis-à-vis conflict in Afghanistan under four US administrations – from Bush to Biden – to ascertain why these strategies proved ineffective. These strategies have been analysed by following the conceptual framework of Game Theory. The paper argues that US strategies for entering Afghanistan were detached from the ground realities, which was the critical factor for its failure to achieve the desired outcome of the conflict.

Keywords: Afghanistan, US Intervention, Use of Force, State-building, Taliban.

Introduction

Afghanistan stands as one of the most intractable and complex issues in contemporary international relations. The country has constantly been undergoing internal and external conflicts in the modern era. Though Afghanistan is not a large country by territory and population, its geostrategic importance has attracted the intervention of great powers time and again. It is located at the crossroads of South, Central, and East Asia, linking China and Asia to Europe through the ancient Silk Route. Today, states, particularly China, are pursuing the revival of old trade routes; but the strategic position of Afghanistan has been causing frequent invasions. In the 19th century, it suffered from the Great Game collision between Britain and Tsarist Russia. In the 1980s, it underwent a conflict mainly because of the Cold War rivalry between the US and the USSR. Since the 1979-Soviet invasion, Afghanistan has constantly been in a state of turmoil, including the US 20-year military campaign after the 9/11 incident.

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These longstanding disputes left Afghanistan least developed among the comity of nations.

Taliban takeover in 1996, amidst a bloody civil war in the country, soon turned problematic. The radical policies of the Taliban regime and its close association with Al Qaeda provoked a critical response from the world, especially from the west. The 9/11 incident, therefore, proved to be a turning point when the US decided to undertake military intervention in Afghanistan to dismantle Al Qaeda safe havens and take away the Taliban regime. However, US-led armed intervention in Afghanistan became the longest in history and failed to quell the Taliban, who returned to power even before the US completed its exit. This most-expensive War on Terror evidenced the most critical failure for the US state-building objective. While consuming its overtired military means, the US eventually reached an exit deal with the Taliban in February 2020. Following President Joe Biden's withdrawal announcement, the security and governance structures built by the US and its allies over the past twenty years collapsed within days, consequent to the Taliban's *blitzkrieg*.

The US intervention in Afghanistan can be explained by employing Game Theory variables. Game Theory, introduced by John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern, was initially conceptualised as an economic theory;¹ however, theorists of Political Science and International Relations soon started adapting it. In simple words, the Game Theory deals with a rational decision in conflict situations.² It involves interaction among four variables: players, their respective strategies, corresponding outcomes, and each player's resulting payoffs.³ In this context, each player is rational and determines its choice of method by using knowledge regarding options and gains of other players involved in the game.

The US entered Afghanistan to dissolve the Taliban's government, unwilling to hand over al Qaeda leaders as primary suspects of the 9/11 incident. Correspondingly, the US employed three strategies to deal with the perplexing situation, i.e., use of military force, political settlement, and state-building in Afghanistan. Initially, it was successful in ousting and pushing away the Taliban. However, following the Taliban's regrouping and insurgency from 2005 onwards, the US failed to defeat the group. The state-building project also had its flaws; above all, it was imposed through the corrupt elite without considering the local socio-political and cultural norms. Likewise, the US realization for political settlement came too late and too slow to cover up the failure of the previous two strategies. The common problem with US strategies was its failure to determine choices keeping in view the options and payoffs of the Taliban. The Taliban fought asymmetrical war involving guerrilla warfare tactics, while the US primarily relied on traditional war strategies. The Taliban had an advantage in knowing physical geography and being ahead of local support.

Therefore, the abrupt withdrawal of US-led coalition forces raises serious questions regarding conflict resolution in Afghanistan. US strategies to deal with the Afghan conflict lacked coherence and often changed over time. The US choice of political settlement was the only attempt for a face-saving exit. The US started with a

military invasion to defeat the Taliban and then shifted focus to state-building. Finally, it concluded a withdrawal deal with the Taliban leaving Afghanistan on its own. With the Taliban back in power and the country still on the verge of collapse, Afghanistan represents a blatantly failed US international intervention. Therefore, this paper examines US strategies employed in Afghanistan since 2001, intending to identify the faults that led to US failure in resolving the conflict.

US Post-9/11 Strategies in Afghanistan

The US intervention in Afghanistan is characterised by a lack of clarity and inconsistency about policies, strategic objectives, and simultaneous execution. In 2001, the Bush administration entirely relied on a war model to punish al Qaeda and its supporters, the Taliban. After initial military successes, the US administration attempted to build a western-style democratic government in Afghanistan on the Weberian model. Meanwhile, the Taliban reunited and consolidated themselves in the peripheries of Afghanistan and initiated guerrilla attacks targeting US-led coalition forces. Bush administration adopted a counterterrorism strategy but could not check the Taliban's advances. Later, the Obama administration came up with its policy of 'troop surge' followed by the 'exit plan' that could be implemented partially given the adverse security situation in Afghanistan. In the late 2020s, the Trump administration somewhat succeeded in concluding a peace deal with the Taliban but failed to ensure an intra-Afghan political settlement. Subsequently, the Biden administration faced worldwide criticism for mismanaging the exit from Afghanistan, thus causing the Taliban's rapid takeover and US humiliating departure. This overview of US' Afghan strategies adopted by four consecutive US administrations to deal with the conflict indicates an overriding fact that each method failed to yield the desired outcome.

Strategies of Bush Administration

Bush administration employed military force to invade Afghanistan and soon embarked upon multilateral state-building efforts as the key strategies for resolving the conflict.

a) Use of Military Force

In his September 20, 2001 speech, President George W. Bush outlined the fundamentals of US strategy vis-à-vis the War on Terror. He declared that not just one battle, instead of a lengthy campaign unprecedented in US history, was expected to pursue US interests. He also claimed that terrorists would be deprived of all finances and denied space to run away; further, no state would help or shelter terrorists.⁴ Bush administration adopted a model of proactive military action (pre-emptive self-defence), arguing that the only way to defeat terrorism is to destroy it in the den.

Resultantly, on May 1, 2003, Donald Rumsfeld, the then US Secretary of Defence, announced victory over the Taliban, thus ending combat operations.⁵ Earlier,

President Bush expressed the same by calling it mission accomplished.⁶ Afghanistan President, Hamid Karzai, expressed satisfaction over the US policy's strategic shift by saying that "we are at a point where we have moved from major combat activity to a period of stability and stabilization and reconstruction activities."⁷ It was an early and premature victory celebration. The initial military success against al Qaeda and the Taliban raised US expectations.⁸ However, ground realities turned out to be different. By 2005, the Taliban resurged and launched an asymmetrical war against US-led coalition forces and the Karzai-led Afghan government by mainly conducting suicide attacks.

Several factors accounted for the Taliban's resurgence and US disappointment subjugating them. First, despite US devastating military offensives, the Taliban before long emerged as a resilient force after taking advantage of local conditions and reorganising themselves. They established local networks comprising fighters and commanders having autonomy in operations.⁹ Second, there was a major tactical shift in their attacks; they followed Iraqi insurgent techniques. Earlier, the Taliban used to battle US forces in open combat that caused them huge losses due to technical inferiority. The use of suicide attacks and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) proved effective and inflicted heavy casualties on US and allied forces. Nearly sixty-four attacks were executed against US forces from January 2005 till August 2006.¹⁰ Third, the Taliban were able to exercise social influence and garner support from the people by using grievances associated with perceived corruption of the Afghan government, lack of social services, and ethnic discrimination against Pashtuns. Furthermore, they capitalized on the historical narrative of foreign occupation of Afghanistan by infidels, such as British, Soviets, and Americans.¹¹ These factors helped the Taliban gain logistic support for the insurrection, marginalise the meagre local administrations, and establish their own administrative arrangements.

There were some additional factors for the Taliban's resurgence. Their comeback turned out to be more manageable due to US parallel military campaign in Iraq since March 2003. In addition, cracks appeared in the US-led coalition regarding troop commitments for Afghanistan. European countries were reluctant to send more soldiers because of the increased violence. They were not mindful of local socio-cultural sensitivities and resulting fallout for their fight against the Taliban. On the one hand, the Bush administration was not ready to accept the Taliban as an inevitable stakeholder for achieving sustainable peace in Afghanistan. On the other hand, its military strategy failed to consider local factors and ground realities. However, the faulty US military strategy was just one factor in its Afghanistan failure. Other factors like state-building policy and political settlement had their own downsides.

b) State-building

After an initial military victory against the Taliban and al Qaeda elements, the US focused on state-building in Afghanistan. The Bonn Agreement, adopted in December 2001, laid out a framework for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. It provided

for adopting a new Constitution and establishing state institutions, notably, a representative government, electoral system, judiciary, security forces, and civil administration.¹² The subsequent international conferences and declarations further consolidated these objectives on Afghanistan.¹³ The US and other donor states and agencies provided rich funding towards realising the state-building goals. The Bush and subsequent US administrations, therefore, made significant achievements. A new constitution was adopted, followed by presidential elections in 2004. Next year, elections for National and Provincial Assemblies were held. Meanwhile, the US spent \$ 88.32 billion over the two decades to build, train, equip, and sustain Afghan national security forces comprising the Afghan national army and police force.¹⁴

Despite colossal spending in state-building, the plan miserably failed in terms of consequences for the US conflict resolution strategy. The primary objective behind the US state-building drive was to establish viable governmental and security infrastructures capable of keeping the Taliban at bay and marginalising their influence in Afghanistan. In the meantime, the successive Afghan governments failed in representing all regions and sections of the society, whereas the Taliban set up parallel administrative systems in rural areas. Likewise, the Afghan security forces could never fight against the Taliban independently. With the US departure from Afghanistan, the Afghan government and national security forces crumbled so quickly as they hardly existed. These facts indicate that the US state-building programme in Afghanistan has severe drawbacks.

First, scholarly literature and empirical evidence show that external efforts for state-building succeed when favourable conditions, such as socio-political institutions, economic development, and social homogeneity, are existed.¹⁵ A case in point is US state-building efforts in Japan and Germany, where the abovementioned conditions pre-existed. On the other hand, state-building efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan failed due to the non-existence of democratic institutions, poor economic development, and weak social cohesiveness. Afghanistan, highly fragile in 2001, did not have any pre-existing capabilities to build on the state's strength and scope. In short, the policy of transformation of the state's system led to the failure of US state-building efforts in Afghanistan. Precisely, state-building involvement meets its objectives when it follows the approach of building the existing capacities of the target state but fails when based on its transformation. Second, state-building requires a stable and conducive environment to be effective and productive. With the diversion of US strategic focus from military to political side and opening a new military front in Iraq, the Taliban restructured themselves, resulting in scaled violence.¹⁶ The consequent instability undermined the conducive environment required for state-building and reconstruction activities.

Third, the Afghan ruling elite failed in ensuring its representation across provinces and districts as it remained restricted to Kabul and indulged in the power struggle. The local governments could not effectively dispense international aid to the grassroots level because of corruption, patronage clientelism, and lack of connection or

strains with the central government. It indicates that US state-building plan was only focused on the centre while the periphery remained ignored or mishandled. In other words, state-building in Afghanistan became an elite-centred project, and its trickle-down effect on ordinary people could not be realised. Consequently, both Karzai and Ghani governments were considered foreign political impositions and lacked legitimacy. This drawback translated into a strategic advantage to the Taliban.

Strategies of Obama Administration

After assuming power, President Obama reviewed US policy towards Afghanistan and introduced a new approach known as the Af-Pak strategy. The objective was to bring the US intervention in Afghanistan to a logical end. The key features of this strategy were the stabilisation of Afghanistan and Pakistan, elimination of al Qaeda in both neighbouring states, reconciliation with moderate Taliban, and elevating fight against hardcore Taliban while shifting responsibility to Afghan forces, and phase-wise drawdown US forces, by July 2011.

a) *Af-Pak Strategy*

The Af-Pak strategy was a manifestation of the US' new approach to looking at Afghanistan's turbulence from a broader perspective. Pakistan remained a crucial factor in this approach for compelling reasons. The US believed that al Qaeda had safe havens in tribal (border) regions, fuelling terrorism and insurgency. Considering tribal region an epicentre of terrorism, President Obama termed it "the most dangerous place in the world."¹⁷ Pakistan also faced a terrorist surge, especially in the north-western part, resulting in alarming instability. The situation in Pakistan was also adversely affecting the US counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan. Pakistan was viewed as part of both problem and solution. Therefore, the strategy aimed to stabilise Pakistan and build its economic and military capacity to carry out counterinsurgency offensives in the tribal region.

Besides continuing military assistance, the US announced the Kerry-Lugar Bill for Pakistan that committed \$1.5 billion a year over 2010-2014 to address its development and stability challenges.¹⁸ Further, to overcome the trust deficit and promote political, economic, and security convergence between Pakistan and Afghanistan, the strategy provided for trilateral dialogue involving Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the US. The US initiated bilateral strategic dialogue with Pakistan to engage the latter in a comprehensive cooperation framework within the Af-Pak strategy. Meanwhile, the US increased the frequency of drone attacks against al Qaeda and militants in the tribal belt of Pakistan.

However, despite being impressive in its framework, the Af-Pak strategy did not yield desired results as the US-Pakistan relationship soon experienced several frictions. First, Pakistan officials resented the hyphenation of the country with Afghanistan, arguing that the two countries had different conditions and problems. By implication, different policies were required to deal with them. Second, the US-Pakistan

divergence emerged over the scope and targets of the Pakistan military's counterinsurgency operations as reflected in the US 'do more' mantra vis-à-vis Pakistan. While the Pakistan military conducted effective offensives against insurgents in Swat and South Waziristan, it was reluctant to launch a military operation in North Waziristan under the pretext of overstretching and capacity issues. Considering North Waziristan as a significant sanctuary for militants targeting Afghanistan, the US put diplomatic pressure on Pakistan to extend military action to the agency area.

Third, in 2011, US-Pakistan differences turned tense due to disturbing events connected to CIA contractor Raymond Davis, bin Laden's killing, and US troops' attack on a Pakistani check post. These events resulted in the withdrawal of facilities provided by Pakistan for NATO supplies to Afghanistan and a diplomatic strain in the US-Pakistan ties. Lastly, US drone attacks in the tribal region of Pakistan proved highly controversial and counterproductive. Drone strikes caused collateral damage, fear, and anger among the civilian population resulting in anti-Americanism and blowback at local, national, and transnational levels.¹⁹

b) Peace Initiatives

Obama administration realised the limits of its military solution to the Afghan conflict. The constantly increasing Taliban insurgency and resulting casualties manifested shortcomings of the US policy towards Afghanistan. The Obama administration accepted the relevance of the Taliban and shifted its approach from zero-sum to the non-zero-sum outcome of the war. Therefore, President Obama's Afghanistan strategy assured reconciliation with and support those ready to renounce violence.²⁰ In early 2011, US officials held direct negotiations with the Taliban.²¹ Despite intentions to talk with the Taliban, the US maintained a strategic ambiguity to avoid criticism of its Great Power posture. Only President Trump adopted an overt and straightforward position on the US talks with the Taliban.

In January 2012, the Taliban informally opened a political office in Qatar for negotiations with international stakeholders.²² This development came to secure a peace deal with the US, thus paving the way for US-led coalition forces to withdraw from Afghanistan. The opening of the Qatar office was not sudden; the US-Taliban negotiations mediated by Germany and the Qatari Royal Family led to its establishment. The first direct contact between the US and the Taliban occurred in November 2010, when Mullah Omar's representative, Tayyab Agha, met US officials in Munich,²³ followed by a couple of rounds of negotiations in Doha in 2011. The start of talks at the Qatar office was rather pessimistic. Both sides agreed on releasing five Taliban from Guantanamo Bay prison in exchange for an American soldier, Bowe Bergdahl, but the swap could not be implemented.²⁴ The Taliban were not ready to assure that prisoners being released would not participate in combat operations against the US troops.²⁵ The Taliban cancelled talks within two months of its commencement accusing the US of not showing progress on the prisoners' swap, a precondition to move forward.²⁶

The US-Taliban peace talks initiated by the Obama administration were indicative of several realistic trends and outcomes to take place in the coming years. First, the Taliban maintained an explicit position on talks from the outset. They reiterated their willingness to negotiate a political settlement but not with the Afghan government, whose legitimacy was questioned. Second, they took a tough and uncompromising stance on the preconditions of a political settlement. They gave an impression that they were ready for the failure of the talks but not for a compromise on their stance. The Taliban took advantage of US' hurry to exit from Afghanistan throughout the negotiations, knowing that "you have the watches, but we have the time."²⁷ Third, they were negotiating with a powerful position. They constantly increased aggressiveness against the US forces irrespective of the peace talks. Given the Taliban's rigid stance and a zero-sum approach in negotiations, the peace talks failed and remained at an impasse until President Trump undertook the Afghan peace process with a clear-cut objective.

c) *Exit Plan*

The longevity of the US mission in Afghanistan without any tangible outcome and resulting war-weariness put increasing domestic pressure on the US to come out of the endless war. Obama administration devised a two-fold strategy to conclude US military campaign in Afghanistan. One element called for stepping up counter-insurgency operations against insurgents, while the other element provided for shifting the responsibility of Afghanistan's security to national security forces from 2011 onwards. The US' Afghanistan strategy aimed to clear, hold, build and transfer.²⁸

President Obama appointed General Stanley A. McChrystal, having counterinsurgency experience in Iraq, as commander of the US and international security forces in Afghanistan to materialize his military strategy. After a year, General David Petraeus replaced General McChrystal as commander. In addition, 33,000 more troops were deployed in Afghanistan, raising troops level to around 100,000.²⁹ The plan behind this move was to cripple the Taliban, expedite training of Afghan national security forces and hand over the responsibility of Afghanistan's security to them. In November 2010, NATO countries declared to complete the shift of full responsibility of Afghanistan's security to Afghan forces and significant drawdown of international security forces by 2014.³⁰

The US military strategy for Afghanistan had serious shortcomings resulting in an adverse impact on the US future course of action in Afghanistan. Foremost, it proved ineffective because it was time-bound, with timelines and deadlines for the troops surge, troops drawdown, and handing over responsibility to Afghan forces. It gave the Taliban a psychological and military advantage to adjust accordingly. As the US was running short of time, the Taliban boosted both morale and insurgence. President Obama's strategy was more to satisfy domestic public opinion and NATO allies than to consider ground realities in Afghanistan. The second related factor was the hasty decisions made by President Obama to increase and reduce the number of troops in Afghanistan. The

US troops peaked at 100,000 in 2010-11 and less than 10,000 in 2015. If the military solution was a viable option, the sharp decline in troops' presence was an unrealistic move that did not bode well for the US future engagement in Afghanistan. Finally, the US transferred full responsibility for Afghanistan's security to Afghan forces by December 2014, limiting its role to training and military backup support in special operations under Operation Resolute Support. However, Afghan forces could not seriously withstand the Taliban insurgency. This military weakness gradually resulted in the Taliban's advances culminating in complete control over Afghanistan.

US-Taliban Peace Deal under Trump Administration

The US strategy of peace talks with the Taliban that led to its complete departure from Afghanistan in August 2021 was initiated by President Donald Trump. It was the first time two warring parties got engaged solemnly in a political process. Earlier, the US being status-conscious and optimistic for an advantageous deal, was less willing to engage in open and declared negotiations with the Taliban. However, finding itself trapped in an unending war and facing domestic pressure on the cost of war, President Trump was compelled to go into direct negotiations with the Taliban. Trump administration appointed Zalmay Khalilzad, an Afghan-American diplomat, as US representative for peace talks with the Taliban.

Since the beginning of the war in 2001, players involved sought a zero-sum outcome, but they failed and got stuck in an unending war in Afghanistan. The most protracted and ever-expanding violence proved mutually hurting the US and the Taliban. The start of peace negotiations signified the realisation of both sides that a zero-sum approach was not viable to end the war. On February 22, 2020, two sides agreed to a seven-day ceasefire as a precondition to signing a peace deal in Doha.³¹ Finally, on February 29, 2020, the US and the Taliban signed a historic peace deal in Doha. The Afghan government was not happy with the agreement. President Ashraf Ghani rejected the terms of prisoners' exchange; however, he agreed to accept and released nearly five thousand Taliban prisoners in phases later on.³²

The US-Taliban peace deal included the Taliban's counter-operation assurances, US withdrawal from Afghanistan, intra-Afghan negotiations, and a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire.³³ It contradicted the ground realities. The Trump administration was criticised for agreeing to favour the Taliban and withdraw troops from Afghanistan. The provision of intra-Afghan negotiations proved a non-starter because the Ghani government took an extreme position, fearing that power-sharing would undermine its authority. Taliban-Ghani's approach to power-sharing was inherently contradictory. President Ghani considered his government constitutional, whereas the Taliban took its pre-9/11 regime as legitimate. Consequently, the objectives of the US-Taliban peace deal, namely intra-Afghan peace agreement and ceasefire, could never come into effect. Hence, the US-Taliban peace talks became a withdrawal deal rather than a peace deal.

US Exit under Biden Administration

President Joe Biden termed the Trump administration's political settlement a 'bad deal' and signalled its review. However, given the complex situation in Afghanistan and limited alternative options, he continued with Zalmay Khalilzad's role to succeed intra-Afghan settlement and materialization of the peace process. Meanwhile, the Taliban rejected any possibility of renegotiating peace and hoped the Biden administration would not deviate from the February 2020-deal. Finally, the Biden administration renounced the idea of reviewing the deal and decided to delay the complete departure from Afghanistan from May to August 2021 and push for an intra-Afghan political deal. The major hurdle in intra-Afghan political settlement came from the Afghan government. President Ashraf Ghani refused to accept any power-sharing formula but presidential and parliamentary elections. He even turned down the proposal for an interim government in Afghanistan put forward by Mr. Khalilzad.³⁴

Despite having no progress on an intra-Afghan political settlement, the Biden administration continued its exit plan. In April 2021, President Biden announced the withdrawal from Afghanistan on August 31, 2021, underlining that it would be secure and orderly.³⁵ However, contrary to the expectations of President Biden, US withdrawal from Afghanistan proved chaotic and humiliating. As the US vacated its central military station, Bagram Airbase, in July 2021, the Taliban advances in various provinces of Afghanistan gained momentum. Proving all political estimates and intelligence reports wrong, the Taliban took control of urban areas with little resistance from Afghan security forces following a two-week blitz. On August 16, 2021, President Ashraf Ghani fled the country, and Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, fell into the control of the Taliban. This unexpected development compelled the US to shut down its Kabul embassy and take control of Kabul airport to steer the emergency evacuation from Afghanistan.

Paradoxically, the 2001-US intervention in Afghanistan ended with a shock and disgrace. The longest two-decade US war cost \$2 trillion, 2,300 troops casualties, and above 20,000 troops injuries.³⁶ Although a considerable amount was spent training and equipping 300,000 Afghan security forces, they collapsed just days after the Taliban takeover. The billion-dollar arsenal belonging to Afghan troops also came under the Taliban's possession following the former's surrender. President Biden and his officials argued that Afghan forces could withstand the Taliban insurgency as they outnumbered Taliban fighters and modern weaponry. However, the Taliban's rapid and sweeping victory defied this argument.

President Biden received criticism and blame for the shameful withdrawal from Afghanistan. He might be held responsible for the mismanagement of US withdrawal, but factors behind Taliban victory against the Ghani government had been evolving for a long. Firstly, the US withdrawal deadlines, from Obama to Biden, always gave a psychological advantage to the Taliban. As the US started military drawdown and consequent transfer of security to Afghan forces, the Taliban's willingness to fight and retake Afghanistan boosted. The military capability of the Taliban convinced the US to

engage them in political negotiations and give them concessions. Both factors led to psychological pressure on the Afghan government and security forces. Secondly, the US-Taliban peace deal under the Trump administration favoured the Taliban politically and militarily. Politically, the agreement set a strict deadline for completing US withdrawal from Afghanistan without realizing the intra-Afghan political settlement. President Ashraf Ghani was reluctant to power-sharing with the Taliban due to a fear of being side-lined. Militarily, the deal established a ceasefire between the US and the Taliban, leaving Afghan forces on their own to fight against the Taliban. With this advantage, the Taliban increased offensives against Afghan security forces, which lost morale because of the preceding factors. What followed was obvious!

Conclusion

The US intervention in Afghanistan lacked clarity and consistency regarding strategic objectives, policies, and associated operations. Initially, military offensives against al Qaeda and the Taliban were highly successful. However, the US diversion of military resources to Iraq in 2003 and its shift from military strategy to state-building allowed the Taliban to reorganise and engage in asymmetrical warfare against US-led coalition forces. Afghanistan's physical and social setting was favourable to the Taliban, being local. Likewise, the US state-building programme in Afghanistan had severe limitations and failed due to the non-existent of democratic institutions, economic development, and social cohesiveness. Further, persistent conflict undermined the conducive environment required for state-building activities. Finally, the Afghan ruling elite failed in ensuring outreach across the country and remained limited to Kabul and indulged in power tussle and corruption.

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CHINA'S EMERGENCE AS A POTENTIAL SUPERPOWER AND THE WORLD ORDER

Sager Ghalib Almotairi*

Abstract

In the endemic world, the emergence of China as a potential superpower is surfacing. It has been a long evolutionary process from the coarse period to the age of prosperity that pushes China to an upward trajectory with its reform model for domestic and worldwide growth. Its economic and strategic directions are reaping fruits in the Belt and Road Initiative. Beijing's goodwill has been endorsed by different countries of the world who wish to learn from the ascendancy of China on the world stage. However, with the rise of China, it is feared that it would have implications for the predominant world order. This paper, therefore, highlights the country's political, economic, military, and social reforms by its distinctive Soft Power approach. China is becoming an influential power that cannot be ignored on the global horizon.

Keywords: Rise of China, Superpower, World Order, Soft Power, Socio-economic Development.

Introduction

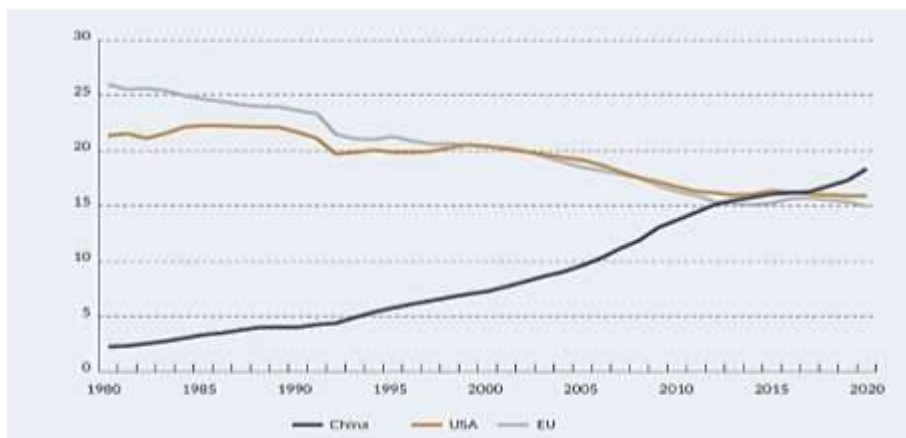
Today, China's status as a global power is due to its pragmatic leadership equipped with understanding geopolitical realities. They have adopted policies that helped China stand as a progressive, powerful nation. The Chinese government's revamping and incorporating traditional policy-mix in building coherent policies over conflicting extents are vital to understanding why China is emerging as a potential superpower.¹ China has a unique governance style; its political structure, mobilization capacity, social contract, and control of the Party-steered bureaucracy can mobilize resources to achieve specific objectives whenever needed.² During the Covid-19 pandemic, a resilient governance system of China proved to be a model for others.³ They have enough strength to look after the global economic issues in a stressful environment. During the Victorian era and immediately after World War II, the UK and US were at the helm of international affairs. History tells us that superpower possesses a military and economic might that influences other nations in a superior manner. This paper, therefore, unfolds how China is fetching the present-day global geoeconomic influence with its political acumen backed by its distinctive Soft Power approach.

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The Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC) brought China together, and the Han Dynasty (206 BC - 220 AD) had the lead position with a reliable outcome. China kept its building capacity despite experiencing numerous decays and fall times. Chinese social orders, or governments, were often described by wide-ranging oppression. It was simply after Spring and Autumn (722-476 BC) and the Warring States period that the subjection debilitated. China was rich enough to continue with a bigger populace, rotated on the Yangtze and Yellow rivers, spilling out of cold mountains. Having the intensity of guard and obstruction, China emerged on the world horizon with worldwide standing.⁴ However, the 19th century was an embarrassment for the Chinese. After two Opium Wars, the western states gave space to China to go to bat for the end of dynastic rule to make it a republic after Xinhai Revolution that ended China's last imperial dynasty.

Later, the May Fourth movement (a cultural and political drive that grew out of student protests in Beijing on May 4, 1919) started, and modernization took the lead even on antiquated occasions. Henceforth, China attained its independence in 1949, after a long battle at domestic and external fronts under the Communist Party of China (CPC). Having experienced an evolutionary process for three decades, China introduced economic reforms (Open-China policy) in 1978 following development patterns. An average 10% growth rate during the past four decades has made China the world's biggest economy, a Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) mark. China is presently the world's biggest trading nation with tremendous administrative capacity, practical in all respects, asserting to be an influential global power that may be exceptional in the realm of Samuel P. Huntington.⁵

Figure-1: GDP Comparison between China, the US, and EU (1980-2020)



(Source: IMF World Economic Outlook Database, April 2021)

The continuous upward trend (Figure 1) is seemingly within easy reach but rising with numerous vulnerabilities. When an ascending force does not get its due share at the world stage and impacts global affairs, the world usually falls victim to grisly fighting. While keeping and maintaining its authority, the existing superpower (the US)

is, therefore, indulging in absurd confrontations with China worldwide. China's rise through socio-economic passages of One Belt, One Road (OBOR) is a grave concern for the US, mainly encompassing China in Asia-Pacific by building strategic partnerships, such as QUAD and AUKUS. These advancements may push the world to an anarchic stage, as before the beginning of two World Wars.

The 6400-km long Silk Route developed during the Han dynasty to trade with Roman and Persian empires was likewise propelled a sort of globalization process.⁶ In the subsequent period, various Chinese dynasties (Sui, Tang, Yuan, and Ming) with their innovative developments and political acumen emerged on the horizon for reasonable times. The Ming dynasty was famous for having unprecedented and unrivalled naval capabilities before the rise of the post-Renaissance western world.⁷ Qing, the last Chinese dynasty, was flexible enough to push ahead; however, the western aggressions, Opium Wars and Boxer Rebellion intricated the situation with its downfall in the 19th century.⁸

With a feeling of disgrace, the dawn of the 20th century stirred the Chinese youth to stand up and bring the Qing dynasty to an end. Thus, the Xinhai Revolution (1911-12) concluded China's four centuries-old dynastic rule to make it a republic. In the following decades, China faced multipronged internal and external difficulties. The war-like situation between CPC and Kuomintang (KMT) kept the country in hot waters. In 1937, the Japanese attack destroyed its infrastructure and drained its resources while leaving 15 and 20 million Chinese dead.⁹ After the withdrawal of Japanese forces in 1945, the situation remained tense, however, culminating in 1949 with the advent of the People's Republic of China, a sovereign state under the CPC. The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), despite progressive advancements, ended up being destabilizing; yet, the Chinese were capable of making their imprint in the UNSC as a permanent member. In the following years, particularly in the wake of Ding Xia Ping's economic policies from 1978 onwards, China has made incredible progress at an average growth rate of 10% to such a degree that the OBOR dream is taking shape under President Xi's vision.

China Belt and Road Initiative – A Global Goodwill

China's history witnessed global isolation and going through a coarse period but had a leap ahead in 1959 when China operationalized its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Accordingly, Beijing has signed numerous bilateral and multilateral agreements with states and organizations under a standardized framework enhancing mutual industrial and trading cooperation. In the process, China has built 75 overseas cooperation zones in 24 countries under the BRI framework. Chinese have invested billions of dollars and successfully created hundreds of thousands of local jobs along the Belt and Road. With a crumbling economic situation and minimal diplomatic engagements, China has turned the tide in its favour and, more importantly, the global good in just five decades. With its leading economy, today's China is an incredible success story and has become one of the most prominent investors in the world.

China is developing and deepening its relations with all Asian predominantly South Asian states by advocating and promoting trade and investment in the region. It espouses enhanced cooperation in the energy and telecommunication sectors. According to China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi, "China believes it is essential to advance peace, development and win-win cooperation, foster a new form of international relations and build a community with a shared future for mankind."¹⁰ The Open China policy and a multilateral approach that China has been carrying for decades stand firm today. China has already rendered multipurpose loans of around \$60 billion to African states. President Xi Jinping states that "China's investment in Africa does not come with any political conditions attached and will neither interfere in internal politics nor make demands that people feel are difficult to fulfil." The Chinese way to impact the global system is by peaceful coexistence, which has proved to be an expression in China's strategic reasoning. China's peaceful coexistence strategy relies on sovereignty and no meddling into other states' internal affairs. Its projection amidst a complex global geopolitical environment has pushed states to cooperate with China for mutual well-being. Liselotte Odgaard argues the same in her book titled "China and Coexistence: Beijing's National Security Strategy for the Twenty-First Century."

China has emerged as the most powerful contender in world politics. It has challenged the classic realist Power Transition theory by initiating BRI projects. It adheres to the present western liberal model, in which states are supposed to be modern, economically liberal, and much transparent while pursuing their policies to become strong. In his book titled "When China Rules the World," Martin Jacques opines that "China is on the right path to rule the world and when it does, it will make the global structure, which will suit her." He further delineates that China is undoubtedly growing with tremendous figures in all spheres, but it has held onto liberal values like peace and cooperation.

Chinese Economic Reforms

Chinese foreign policy is currently more open and extroverted towards external players regionally and globally. They heavily invest worldwide and attract foreign direct investments (FDI).¹¹ Beijing had signed multiple cultural, economic, and military cooperation agreements with its neighbours and various other states. It believes in "building a community of shared future for mankind." According to Chinese policymakers and statemen, no state can survive in isolation and cannot prosper and develop without the prosperity of its immediate neighbouring states. China is, therefore, projecting its peaceful coexistence message with practical implementation to all the nations across the globe.

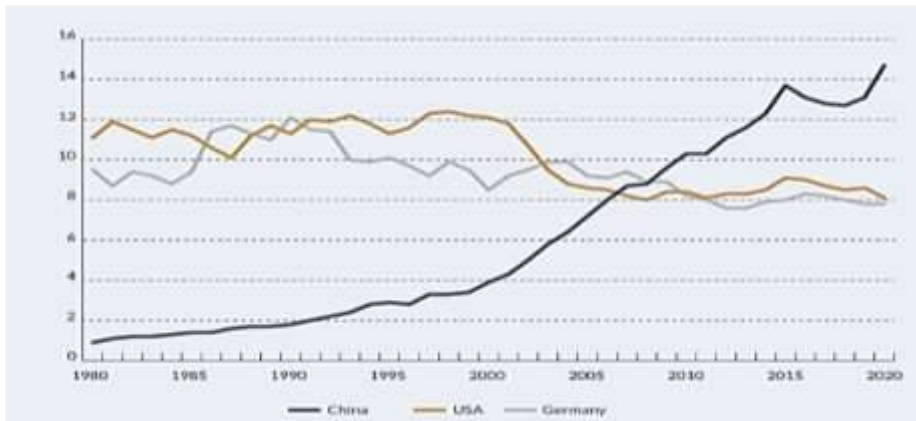
The economic reforms introduced by Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970s brought significant changes in the Chinese economy. For example, China's GDP went up to 9.3% between 1979-1993, and the world experienced an advance movement of 2.6% for a comparable period. The GDP of China has, moreover, quadrupled within 15 years. Also, China has improved its status as a trading nation, rising to 11th in ranking from number

37 in just ten years. In addition, China has accumulated huge foreign exchange reserves, second to none.

China's domestic and international display has been astounding. It has a vast population of around 1.4 billion civilized people with enormous resources. China's economic victories have been tremendous in recent decades, thus merit consideration. Although Western powers ignored and side-lined China until 1971, Deng Xiaoping started revitalising its due share in the global economy. Today, China's growth relies heavily on its endurance and steady pace for the past 25 years. China's economy is mainly sensitive to the good and bad times of the global economy and American utilization specifically. China's robust national economic framework and its growing vitality place vulnerabilities to fiscal expansion.

China's populace is turning grey, as the lump of individuals conceived during Mao's regime put overwhelming weight on the Chinese born during the 1980s and after. Meanwhile, China's industrialization imitates the mechanical cycle led by the US, followed by Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan as they moved away from the overwhelming industry. The growing economic influences have urged China to ascend as an economic superpower. US media have observed Chinese oil diplomacy, as its oil imports have had sway on gas prices. In the steel and shipbuilding industries, China has put enormous efforts. It shows China's enthusiastic economic success over the last 20 years. The low-cost Chinese goods from Walmart and first-class retail garments from the Chinese manufacturers highlight low job costs that make China influential, replacing the traditional American assembly plants.

Figure-2: Exports Comparison between China, the US, and Germany (1980-2020)



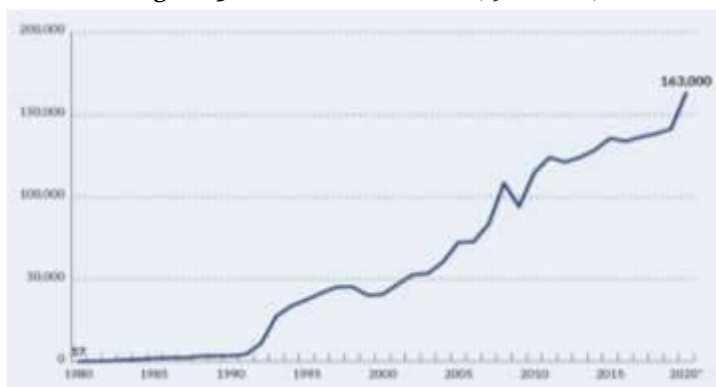
(Source: <https://data.wto.org/>, May 2021)

Remarkable examples are signposting the appearance of China as a gigantic economy, highlighting ascend in global business. It is hard to detach a China that builds up its military to protect national interests and seek national reunification from a China turning into an economic challenge for other influential states. It is indeed a cause of

disturbance for China in the US offering arms to Taiwan, triggering militarization of the region. However, China's approach has been cooperative and coordinated for advantageous outcomes, despite having some disparities. In 1999, the Sino-US relationship endured the shelling of the Chinese consulate in Belgrade and US nuclear weapons mysteries to reach an arrangement over China to join the World Trade Organization. China's conduct on the global stage has matured, and its economic drive is benefiting other states. China's purchasing power is rising with its vast population.

For quite a long time, as Joseph Needham relates in his book series titled "Science and Civilization in China," China had driven the West by most extents of advancement, offering significant inventions, such as paper. The Ming Dynasty witnessed massive Chinese sea expeditions reaching all nations around the Indian Ocean and China Sea. As Daniel Boorstin calls attention to, when the pope placed Galileo on preliminary in Rome, Jesuits lectured the Galilean gospel in Beijing.

Figure-3: FDI in China in USD (1980-2020)



(Source: UNCTAD, 2021)

The outbreak of Covid-19 in Wuhan was a massive shock to the Chinese economy regarding trade. China adopted several countermeasures to promote its business, including risk mitigation, innovation, e-commerce, and modernizing logistics systems. China was the first to adopt restrictive measures nationwide, though adversely affecting its production and exports. Furthermore, its international trade and capital flow also suffered once the Covid-19 became a global pandemic engulfing 3.9 billion people spanning 90 states. However, when the restrictive measures were eased and lifted, China's trade and FDI indicators showed significant improvement and achieved a record growth rate. Interestingly, the trade and FDI with BRI-partner states remained strong.¹²

The 2020-statistics of the National Bureau of China witnessed a decline in the economy; however, China has proved to be the first major global economy to recover from the pandemic. Its V-shaped recovery proved to be a promising strategy for the rest of the world. New opportunities and avenues have been explored, tried, and fostered in China, including new technologies, demands, and consumer habits. Eventually, the

Covid-19 pandemic has proven to be an accelerator for China's digital economy, supporting wide-ranging finances and supply chains.¹³ China now relies less on export-oriented strategy and more on boosting domestic demand. Covid-19 has augmented such economic transition by enhancing domestic industrial chains and increasing innovation investment.

China's Military Power

The last forty years have seen a significant tilt in the global strategic balance, but the question remains who can compete with the US militarily. By the late 1980s, the Soviet Union was indeed the military power capable of competing with the US. Its strategic arsenal included 10,000 nuclear warheads, and the conventional arsenal was plentiful, with nearly 20,000 tanks deployed in Europe. On the other hand, China was under mocking for its purchases of western military equipment to dismantle and renew in its modified version. Today, the US sees China as its competitor at the global stage capable of challenging it militarily.

For more than 20 years, Beijing has acquired the means of military power, considered an essential element of a nation's global dominance. Since the late 2000s, China has adopted a much more aggressive strategy than in the past. Breaking with the status quo, China is trying to introduce its indigenous standards and model of the relationship between major powers based on accepting broad fundamental interests. China is a power engaged on the international stage, with France in Mali, in anti-piracy operations, in the Gulf of Aden, for rescue operations at sea or to respond to a natural disaster. Yet, beyond the appearances and signals sent by Beijing, the reality of China's military might and its capacity for engagement is massive. The defence budget of China, since 1990, has been increasing by almost 10% per year. It is the second-largest defence budget after the US, higher than Japan, India, and South Korea combined. With a growth long-hovering around 10% of GDP and increasing defence budgets at the same rate, a mechanical military catches up against economies with a growth rate of 2 to 3% in the best years.

Figure-4: Defence Budgets of Different States



(Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2017)

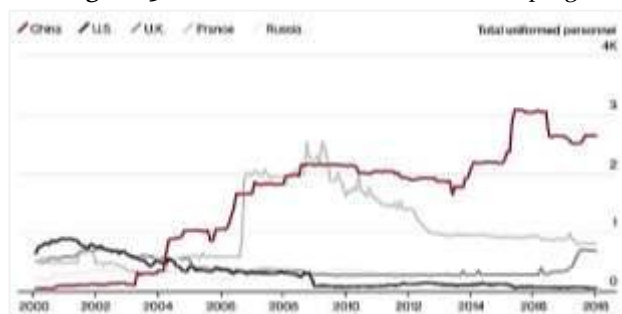
China has had a deliberate military modernization program from 1989 onwards to undertake expanding defence assignments in China's open-state policy. The military modernization in China concentrates on the needs of conflict situations. China is developing a maritime force equipped with advanced weaponry, including Russian-propelled aircraft, Overmining destroyers, SS-N-22 Sunburn missiles, and Backfire aircraft. During the last 20 years, China's naval force has progressively raised its banner far and wide. Its military objectives remain clear; some are acquiring 'green-water' (nearshore) marine and air support abilities to guard China's waterfronts and win rapidly and unequivocally. It is preserving second-strike capabilities against an essential first strike. China is developing the military capacity to sustain its stand on the Taiwan issue either strategically or by military power. In addition to China, states bordering the South China Sea have claimed all or part of the South China Sea maritime spaces. In these circumstances, negotiation seems complicated as each state opposes the claims of the others.

China is shifting the balance of military power in Asia. Its military modernization has taken colossal progress, and its military reforms warrant prudence, not warning. After 20 years of concerted efforts, China's military modernization has created a more antique frame of what the US Secretary of Defence calls the annual report of congress 'pockets of greatness.'

China's Political and Soft Power

The characteristic of the US as a superpower, arising out of the Cold War, is a broad coalition. It ranges from NATO to 1951-Anzus settlement with Australia and New Zealand, including military agreements with Japan and South Korea and the Five Eyes intelligence alliance between the US, UK, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. The most recent developments in this regard are QUAD and AUKUS. On the other hand, China, despite all, has no conventional partners. It concentrates more on economic growth under BRI without displaying aggressive behaviour. Peacekeeping is a non-coercive method to impact the world over. Therefore, China is the most significant troops contributor to UN peacekeeping missions. Likewise, it pays over 10% of the UN expenditure, more than any nation other than the US, which yields 28.5%.

Figure-5: Contributions towards Peacekeeping



(Source: UN Peacekeeping Database)

China remained a pariah in its early independence days, kept out by US strategic ban and isolation from the global political and economic system. When Beijing joined the UN in 1971, it reclaimed its position and started using conventional means to access markets worldwide to pursue its interests abroad. As reforms made by Deng Xiaoping transformed China's economy and its ties with the world, China's global prestige and political influence grew manifold. The 1989-Tiananmen demonstration, reforms in eastern Europe, and fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 made China politically aware. China's political impact has become more evident in recent decades. It has sought to recognize its economic achievement as a diplomatic influencer and change its image as human rights violator worldview.

China's permanent seat in the Security Council (1971) was probably the most significant gain in legislative matters internationally. China used its veto power to mediate and resolve the issues. During the Gulf emergency in 1990-91, Beijing voted to favour Iraq's endorsement for UN priorities. It required Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait apart from authorizing military force. Beijing abstained while expressing its concerns about the targets. Regardless of economic and strategic competition between China and the US, things are not chilling out on numerous fronts. The US is not modest in its approach towards China rising as an influential force. The US has conflicting sentiments that China has developed an exchange war by money control and violating Intellectual Property Rights. The financial growth of China, being a reality, cannot be effectively swapped by the US. Therefore, the significant step taken by the US was the 'Pivot to Asia' strategy, under which the US moved its maritime apparatus to Asia.

During the past four decades, the Chinese growth rate and PPP mark have somewhat exceeded the western world's advancement. In 1978, China's all-out external exchanges were worth \$21 billion.¹⁴ However, China has now achieved the \$4 trillion mark of international trade¹⁵ as the world's largest trading nation, with a trade balance being more than \$442.4 billion in 2017.¹⁶ China enjoyed a \$375 billion trading balance with the US in 2017¹⁷ and more than \$176 billion with the EU.¹⁸ China's trading volume is more than \$300 billion, with AU states in 2015 from just \$10 billion in 2005.¹⁹ Chinese trade volume is around \$514 billion with ASEAN. Brazil trades more with China than with the US in its neighbourhood. China has also deepened trade relations with its neighbours, having a trade balance of more than \$51.8 billion with India.²⁰ Chinese process of diversifying its economy, especially by building up peaceful means of power, continues.²¹ Chinese investors buy sports clubs, and sports are advancing at home. Its proof was visible in 2008 when China stood first on the medallist in the 2008-Beijing Olympics while its position was second in the London Olympics.²² The successful conduct of the 2022-Winter Olympics in China is another display of its Soft Power.

Impact for World Order

China's rise in recent years has been from any viewpoint and merit consideration, particularly considering the troublesome course of China's endeavour to adjust itself to the cutting-edge world since the 19th century. Presently, China is not a

superpower, nor is it prone to arise as one soon. It is building up itself as an incredible force, comparable to the US, Great Britain, and Japan. China's stature and power are developing at the global level; however, it stays a local force in some instances, supplementing others under the predominance of the US. From the viewpoint of pragmatist international relations, it does not justify the caution and anxiety of the declaration of a showing-up superpower. Between the 2007 and 2010 financial crises, China was presented with opportunities and challenges. It might attempt to modify its role and become the pivotal entity in the power relations dictating the global structure. That shift would have included getting out of the reserved diplomacy China always decided on, which was by no means an easy task for the state. The change from reserved diplomacy to multilateralism was the transformation that progressively shaped rising China.

Traditionally, China stayed cautious of the outside world. Even during the Cold War era, China's relations with other states were on the notion of self-defence and fortification of its people from colonial powers and their dominion. However, the 1980s witnessed a comparatively new China under the direction of Deng Xiaoping, which brought in foreign investment in the land. Xiaoping's open-door policy was more inclined to the ideas and viewpoints of the rest of the world. China surpassed itself while transforming diplomacy and socio-economic policies, which made it rise as an implausible power that modified the international structure in profound ways. The intricacies of world affairs, especially the history of China, and the fluctuations other ruling powers of the world experienced in the past have taught China of today to engage itself in joint ventures with different organizations and reassess its relations with the US and other emerging global powers.

Meanwhile, it appears to be true that it has been China's policy to act carefully and make sure not to present itself as a danger in the emerging new world order. And as a substitute, China aims to validate itself as a Soft Power and make its active role evident with multilateral diplomacy. That is how China has been guarding its peculiar interests while building its progressive reputation as a responsible global power. China has augmented its involvement in international security concerns, from the Six-Party dialogues to the diplomatic responsibilities carried out in Iran and Sudan. Simultaneously, it has secured senior positions in international institutions, such as the UN, WHO, IMF, and WTO.

Conclusion

Although it is perplexing and challenging to draw any substantiated deductions on the influence of the global financial crisis, explicitly on China's diplomacy, global security issues, and economic strategies, China has achieved a significant position at the international stage. The People's Republic of China has transformed its approach from observing the world from a distant and traditionalist viewpoint to a more involved, flexible, and rational one, emphasizing multilateralism and mutual socio-economic course of action. However, China's contribution at the global level is limited to the

projects rather than setting agendas or policymaking internationally. But then again, the recent financial crisis amidst Covid-19 undoubtedly has offered China a prospect of initiating flexing its global management muscles. All the while is firming up its bilateral position vis-à-vis the US. The US strategies of countering China are poised to destabilize the whole international order, which in the light of realist theory may go on the path of unrest.

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FAILURE OF ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION: A CASE OF DISMAL STATE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN KASHMIR AND PALESTINE

*Muhammad Shamshad and Farooq Arshad**

Abstract

A profound observation of human rights endorses democratic norms, socio-political stability, economic prosperity, and the rule of law. Almost all developed states ensure their citizens with the protection of fundamental rights, and, in return, community plays a critical role in nation-building. Many human rights activists and organizations highlight the shortcomings behind the promulgation of laws for human security and plan to maintain security. Some developing states have failed to copy the developed states' human rights policy framework, especially regarding the protection of human rights. They are either trying to deprive their minorities of fundamental rights or confiscating their territories while pushing them into deteriorated conditions. India and Israel are two prominent examples of this connection. This study, therefore, analyses how India is dealing with its minorities, especially Muslims in illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir. It also calls attention to the expansionist policy of Israel, disposing of Palestinians from their territory, thus experiencing the worst form of human rights violations. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has also forgotten the objectives of its formation. Its leadership is dormant, which has paved the way for India and Israel to inflict more aggression on innocent Muslims. The study suggests that OIC leadership should be more active, saving Muslims from the worst kinds of human rights violations.

Keywords: Kashmir, Palestine, OIC, Human Rights, Violation.

Introduction

From Magna Carta to the bill of rights, from an authoritarian regime to a democratic society, no one has declined the value of human rights. They are indispensable for democratic institutions and the realisation of best selves. The observation of human rights creates increasing enlightenment levels and peoples' quest for equality and dignity.¹ However, in Kashmir and Palestine, this preposition has lost its meaning as both territories are experiencing the least observation of human rights. India and Israel victimize the inhabitants (Muslims) of both regions while alleging them to promote Islamic militancy. History reveals how Indians and Israelis illegally occupied the areas and used institutionalized impunity to bring these territories under their control. A brief history of Kashmir and Palestine can clear the picture much better.

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Kashmir has remained a dispute between Pakistan and India since the partition of British India in 1947; unfortunately, it has fallen prey to Indian aggression. Kashmir was the only princely state (with a Muslim majority) that shared its boundary with Pakistan and India. Therefore, its ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh (1895-1961), who could appropriately join either, did not resist the immense pressure of Indian politicians and their supporters in the region. In October 1947, Indian military forces entered Kashmir unlawfully on a false pretext. The saga of the Kashmir conflict thus began at that very particular moment and continues.²

In 1954, the Indian government included Article 370 in the constitution, giving the Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) a special status to justify their wrongdoings. The powers relating to foreign affairs, defence, communication, and currency were vested to India, and the State would handle the remaining ones. Unlike other states, due to denied territorial principles, Kashmiris could claim further arrangements if they found themselves unhappy with the measures of New Delhi. Nehru, who was an instrumental figure in shaping a special status for Kashmir, deployed forces to quell the vacillations of Sheikh Abdullah. At that time, Sheikh Abdullah was a prominent political figure (1947-82) who fought for the Kashmir cause.³ Since then, Kashmir's struggle for freedom begins that has taken much to end.

Furthermore, the unrest since 1988 gave birth to a new series of protests against Indian atrocities that turned into a freedom movement. New Delhi ignored and did not heed to resolve the issue through dialogue with Pakistan and Kashmiri leaders. Instead, India used troops against demonstrations which often resulted in numerous deaths of innocent Kashmiris. At the same time, the Indian political elite viewed aggression and suppression as a tool to quiet the voice of Kashmiris. However, the Indian oppressive model for curbing Khalistan Movement in the 1980s did not work in IIOJK. Kashmiris denied being a strategic pawn and wanted to assert their self-determination right.⁴ From the 1990s onward, Kashmiris have been victimized by Indian security forces through their extreme violence, such as fake encounters and extrajudicial killings, to curb the freedom movement. Map 1 presents a picture of Indian strategies devised for launching violent campaigns against innocent Kashmiris.

Map-1: Indian Boundary to Launch Operations in IIOJK

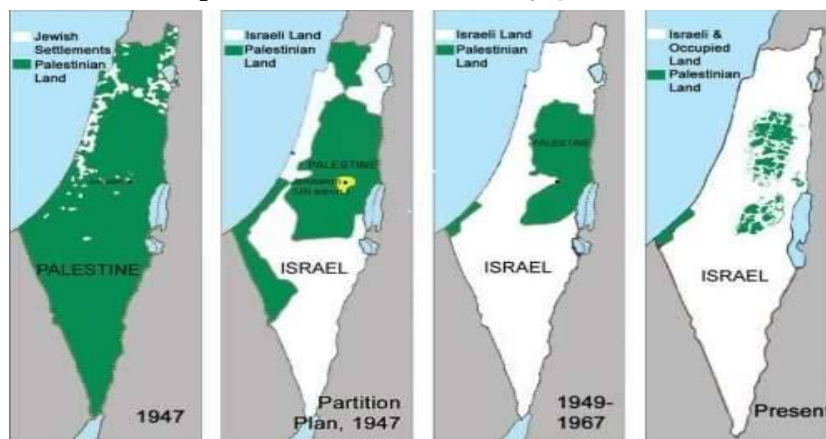


(Source: sajadbangash.files.wordpress.com⁵)

The Palestine-Israel conflict has its roots in the British promulgation of the Balfour Declaration (1917) to accommodate Jews. Lord Rothschild, a leader of the British Jews community, announced his memorandum on July 18, 1917, to enforce the declaration. He adopted the principle that Palestine should be reconstituted as a national home for Jews.⁶ British tried to propagating that only Jews could rebuild Palestine and get their lost place during World War I. The British lobby was to legalize Jews' settlement in Palestine and then manipulate it. The idea of rebuilding and reconstituting Palestine has proved wrong today.

The conflict shaped up in May 1947 when the region was divided between Palestine and Israel under the UN. According to this unlawful division, 54 percent area was given to Israel, and the rest of 46 percent was for Palestine. It seemed ambiguous if made based on population as Jews were 31.5 percent of the total population at that time. The division pushed Palestinians to launch the struggle for freedom. Jews were still unhappy with the division as they were eager to occupy a larger region. Since then, "the terror has become widely spread for Palestine."⁷ Palestinians started to struggle for their socio-economic development, but the western lobby deprived them off while giving undue favour to the ulterior motives of Jews. During the 1950s, all policies were devised to snatch more and more territories from Muslims in Palestine. The major powers equally supported these policies, such as Britain and the US. As a result, Israelis occupied most of the Palestinian territories in 1967.⁸ The year 1967 has an important place in the history of Palestine because of the legalized Israeli occupation on most of the Palestinian territories, and Jews' expansionist policy is still working for acquiring more lands to control.

Map-2: Palestinian Loss of Land 1947 to Present



(Source: <https://www.guengl.eu>)

Map 2 tells the whole story of the Israeli annexation policy that has converted Palestinians into a minority in their land. It covers the era from 1947 to date while presenting Palestinian territories in green colour, which appears to be faded rapidly on the map from left to right.

The Israeli government designated July 1, 2020, as the process date for formal annexation of Palestinian West Bank swathes. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Minister of Defence Benny Grantz considered this annexation a key promise they had made during their electoral campaign after searching for political support from the Trump administration through the Peace to Prosperity plan of January 2020.¹⁰ The purpose was to provide the apartheid system with a legal cover which Israel has practiced over past decades. The program seeks Israel to manipulate the city of Jerusalem completely, legalise illegal settlement of Jews in the West Bank and annex the Jordan Valley.¹¹ Palestinians rejected the deal of the century and named it a deception, being an imposition.

An analysis of history contemplates that IIOJK and Palestine-Israel conflicts have many repercussions in the wider Islamic world. India considers Kashmir as its province lost to *dar-al-Islam*. That is why it creates a blend of socio-economic problems for Muslims to get it back. Similarly, Muslim Arabs want to establish an independent state.¹² Restoring peace in both cases is still conditional on India and Israel's approaches to dealing with Muslims. But, the current state of Indo-Israel relations makes observers pessimistic in this notion. Their cooperation in nuclearization is a clear signal that they have acquired a similar nature and capability for creating more implications for their Muslim communities. Mahwish Hafeez describes their common aggression-based psyche in the following way:

*India and Israel share a common national psyche which makes them natural allies. Both have been extending their respective roles in [illegally occupied] Muslim lands. India and Israel see themselves as democracies surrounded by hostile and implacable adversaries. In their perception, no other two countries in the world have suffered so much.*¹³

This research, therefore, revolves around human rights violations in IIOJK and Palestine. It deals with the political motives of India and Israel, where they seem to manipulate the referred territories of Muslims. Historical facts reveal different strategies adopted to snatch the land from Muslims and convert them into a minority. Accordingly, India and Israel introduced several laws to victimize Muslims in their territories. Recently, a couple of amendments in the Indian constitution regarding the status of IIOJK have deprived Kashmiris of their due rights and status. The same has been the case with Palestine since the 1960s. Israel has acquired far-fetched support from western powers and introduced many laws to de-shape Palestine. This paper also analyses the humanitarian aspect of these conflicts. It reflects the least observation of human rights in Kashmir and Palestine, particularly women and children who are suffering the most. It must be a shock for international media. Not to speak of the international community, even OIC has been dormant, resulting in soaring problems for Muslims in these lands.

Violation of Human Rights in IIOJK

Indian violent activities against Kashmiris have been a routine, but 1989 can be marked with the worst beginning in this context. Thousands of people were humiliated, tortured, injured, and killed. Many people lost their beloved children, daughters, sisters, mothers and some women lost their husbands due to the cycle of violence prevalent in IIOJK. Under this pitiful condition, thousands of houses and shops were burnt down, clinched their dwellings, and restrained their economic activities.¹⁴ With a rise in the influence of the *Bhartiya Junta Party* (BJP) on Indian politics during the 1990s and the early 21st century, Kashmiris had to suffer more.

BJP has been ruling India with an ideology of Hindu nationalism since 2014 that has caused an irreversible loss to the life security of Muslims in India, especially Kashmiris. Under the Modi government, the duration from 2016 to 2018 has witnessed the worst human rights violation in Kashmir Valley (IIOJK). On July 8, 2016, the Indian force martyred 22-year-old Burhan Wani, a leader of *Hizbul Mujahidin*, in the Bandoura village. There triggered protests against his killing. Females were also there in the demonstrations, which had not been participating in the past before this incident. These protests appeared to involve more people than in the 1980s, 1990s, 2008, and 2010. Indian forces responded to demonstrations with weapons and committed atrocities against Kashmiris. The aggression of Indian troops led to casualties and a wide range of alleged related human rights violations in IIOJK.¹⁵

Indian violence against Kashmiri Muslims rose due to the Pulwama attack. It was frustration and depression that led to committing such violent acts to negate Indian brutal practices. On February 14, 2019, a young Kashmiri committed a suicide attack in which more than 40 Indian soldiers were killed. He represented Kashmiri youth suffering from unstoppable Indian brutalities.¹⁶ This incident led to increased extrajudicial killings in Kashmir to 162, which was 119 in 2018. Indian forces claimed these killings because of counterinsurgency operations. They are killing innocent people in the name of counterinsurgency, and people are finding ways to hurt them back. A report of Kashmir Institute of International Relations (KIIR) reveals the state of frustration among Kashmiris in such a way:

These acts are the substantive tool to frustrate the Kashmiri people, as it's not the killing of one individual but the killing of a generation who wants to take revenge at any cost, thus adopting the unfair and unlawful means to do so. It's the violation of fundamental human rights of liberty, freedom of speech, thought, opinion, and religion. These acts restrain the rights of movement, self-esteem, respect, and dignity of the Kashmiri people.¹⁷

Under this dismal state of human rights, Indian and international media have been reluctant to show an accurate picture of state-sponsored violence in IIOJK. The Indian government is not ready to disclose the facts to the public; however, foreign researchers and authors like Christophe Jaffrelot have highlighted many inhumane killing practices in IIOJK. Among these, rape is the worst form of torture. Others may include “strangulation by steel wire, hanging, branding with red hot irons, burning alive,

lynching, gouging of eyes before the assassination, slicing, dismemberment of bodies, drowning alive and slaughter.”¹⁸

The use of institutionalized impunity has also become the order of the day in IIOJK, allowing Indian armed forces to commit atrocities towards Kashmiris, which has raised the graph of human rights violations unprecedentedly. Recently, the BJP government has repealed Article 370 to eliminate the special status of IIOJK and declare Ladakh and IIOJK as Indian Union territories. The abrogation of Article 35A has also paved the way for Indians to apply for citizenship of IIOJK. Any outsider (Hindu) can invest in Kashmir to boost economic activities. Political experts and thinkers believe that these measures of the BJP government will be working as the last nail in the coffin for soaring human rights violations in IIOJK. They opine that India has adopted the Israeli model to change statistics and convert Kashmiris into a minority on their land. Like Israel, India (BJP) has decided to increase the number of Hindus in the region and establish IIOJK as a Hindu majority territory.

Furthermore, increasing the number of extra-judicial killings in IIOJK has been terrible and inhumane to decrease the number of Muslims in the region.¹⁹ Resultantly, the *Hindutva* followers have influenced Indian politics badly regarding IIOJK that has pushed the State into a lockdown since August 5, 2019. Kashmiris have been deprived of communication facilities, their fiscal activities are now limited to an extreme level, and they do not have access to educational institutions. Such least observation of human rights in IIOJK has triggered another ray of freedom among Kashmiris from the clutches of cruel and extremist Hindu leadership. In 2021, after two years, the Modi government stripped Kashmiris of their limited autonomy. Their political activities are in a deep freeze; businesses are struggling, and most importantly, public rights are being suppressed through stringent laws.²⁰

Another aspect of human rights violation in IIOJK is violence against women, which international media and organizations have mostly neglected. UNSC has adopted resolution-1325 on the security and protection of women. It guarantees their safety through institutional arrangements, especially during an armed conflict. Unfortunately, this resolution is not being practiced by the Indian government that has caused colossal damage to the security of women in IIOJK.²¹ Dr. Shireen M. Mazari, Federal Minister for Human Rights in Pakistan, elaborates that rape has been used as a weapon of war. The same practice can be seen in IIOJK, where Indian security forces hunt Kashmiri women without fearing action against them. Mobina Ghani was raped in 1990, and no action was taken against officials involved. In July 1990, another rape case was filed against Indian border security forces but did not meet with any decision. Similarly, Indian soldiers used to go to Kunan and Poshpora villages, where they separated women from their men and raped them. Those who survived these attacks are still fighting for justice. Unfortunately, the international community is dormant and still has not done much.²²

Human Rights Abuse in Palestine

The current scenario reflects that Israel is the only country followed by India, involved in violent practices to victimize innocent Palestinians. In 2013, Israel accepted or partially accepted the recommendations of Amnesty International to end impunity being enjoyed by Israeli forces while hurting the human rights situation in Palestine. But, most of the recommendations have been denied by the Israeli army, private security guards, and police, who have continued to use excessive and lethal force against innocent people. This use of force has led to numerous unlawful killings, “including possible extrajudicial executions.”²³ The Israeli government also encourages its settlers to commit atrocities against Palestinians. The settlers attack them, harass them, damage their property and inflict physical violence that often results in injury and death.²⁴

There is no rule of law and active institutions in Israel which can provide Muslims in Palestine with justice. There is a long list of biased decisions of the Israeli judiciary that has brought the human rights situation to the lowest ebb in Gaza. The death of Abdel Fattah Al-Sharif on March 24, 2016, in Hebron at the hands of Elor Azaria, an Israeli soldier, has sparked a widespread public debate. Elor was just found guilty of manslaughter and was sentenced to 18 months in January 2017, blaming that ‘he has violated the Israeli army’s rules of engagement.’ Similarly, two Israelis were charged with the murder of three members of the *Dawabsheh* family in 2016 and were released after minor punishments.²⁵

There are rare cases in which Israeli soldiers and settlers are given severe punishments after martyring Palestinians. But, this severity does not meet with the death penalty either. For example, in 2016, the Jerusalem court charged Yousaf Bin David with the murder of 16-year-old Muhammad Abu Khdeir in July 2014. Despite all the witnesses and proof to hang him after a fair trial, Yousaf was sentenced to life imprisonment. These facts reveal that the investigation process in Israel to convict its soldiers and settlers has fallen far short of international standards. The number of violent attacks is soaring day by day. In most cases, Israeli soldiers and immigrants are not held accountable despite solid evidence that a crime occurred.²⁶

Under the recommendations of Amnesty International of 2013, Israel promised to minimize administrative detention use and promulgate the concept according to international standards. Nonetheless, a status quo and incarceration of Unlawful Combatants Law can be seen as an alternate use to arrest, charge, and prosecute suspected Palestinians, justifying through even insufficient evidence. Most of the suspects are held under administrative detention solely for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association. Currently, the number of detained Palestinians has increased rapidly. For instance, the number of Palestinians held under administrative detention was 135 in October 2013, which soared dramatically to 447 until June 2017.²⁷

Like India, gender-based violence (GBV) has become the most extensive form of violence in the Gaza strip. Night raids, arrests, restrictions on freedom of movement,

and aid entering the Gaza strip are the significant components of this aggression that have invigorated tense situations for women. The acts of aggression towards Palestinian women utilized by Israeli forces are also in direct contradiction with international human rights laws. These acts have caused disastrous effects on the sense of safety of women and girls in the West Bank and Gaza. The lack of humanitarian aid resources has a detrimental impact on women. It has weakened them to such an extent that they cannot tackle violence against them in a suitable manner.²⁸

Violation of the right to health is another constituent of discrimination against women in Palestine. Usually, women with chronic diseases have been denied access to health services in Gaza. The most terrible thing is that many pregnant women have to wait for long periods at checkpoints during their travel to access healthcare centres. The Committee against Torture (CAT), time and again, has condemned this inhuman treatment of women at checkpoints that often cause delays or denials of passage even in emergency cases. CAT has also called on Israel several times to ensure that its soldiers go for humane and respectful ways for security controls. It can bring a sigh of relief for women in sensitive situations.²⁹

Social media is the most effective tool to raise a voice against violence anywhere in the world. Muslims in Palestine are also trying to use this tool, but Israel is trying to destroy the media in Palestine that makes Palestinians able to access their relatives. The Israeli authorities have arrested many Palestinians for social media posts. They have charged them with incitement, relying on overly broad laws and military orders that could be seen to include peaceful criticism of Israeli policies. According to a human rights group, Addameer, 350 Palestinians have been arrested over the charges of this incitement.³⁰ The absence of a communication system in Palestine has given birth to new violent practices like kidnapping young girls who often meet with misfortune in being raped by Israeli soldiers. There is no check and balance on these criminal activities because Palestinians do not have access to information technology to trace such cases.

More recently, inhuman acts of Israelis to occupy *Al-Aqsa* Mosque (the former *Qibla* of the Muslims) terrorized Muslims. The Israeli leadership claimed that Palestinians were provided with rockets and missiles by Turkey and Syria to fight against Israeli forces. To justify attacks and occupation, the chief supporters of Israel equally seconded these lame excuses, especially the US. No doubt, OIC and some other Muslim organizations condemned violent behaviour, but until heinous acts were convicted, they had damaged the Palestinian integrity and solidarity.

In October 2020, an Israeli court ruled that several Palestinian families, who were the residents of Shaikh Jarrah, would be evicted by May 2021 with their land handed over to Jewish families. In February 2021, they filed an appeal against forcible displacement from their homes in Jerusalem, but all in vain. In return, Palestinians launched a series of protests in late April 2021. On May 10, 2021, Hamas was reported to launch hundreds of rockets in Israeli territory. The Israeli forces responded with airstrikes and artillery bombardments for 11 days, leaving hundreds of Palestinians dead.³¹ Unfortunately, OIC member states could not ensure their full-fledged support

for Palestinians; instead, they got divided based on sects and demands of their western allies.

Role of OIC

The formation of OIC in 1969 was one of the earliest fruits of decolonization. The global political scenario was another factor behind the appearance. Muslims were being suppressed, especially in the Middle East, which forced Muslim leadership to be united to cope with individual and collective problems and promote universal peace. The event of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque fire in Jerusalem in August 1969 became an immediate cause to consolidate 25 Muslim states (now 57) into a unit. Saudi Arabia became headquarters of this pan-Islamic organization from where it could serve as “the collective voice of the Muslim world and seeks to both safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world.”³²

The mandate of OIC included the promotion of all-around cooperation among its members, protection of Islamic holy places, and eradication of racialism and colonialism. Its charter was composed to consolidate a bond of fraternity among its member states and secure the members' common interests and legitimate causes. It also emphasized coordinating to overcome the Islamic world's overall challenges, preserve the rights of self-determination, sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of each member, and promote good governance, democracy, human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law at national and international levels.³³

Unfortunately, the objectives mentioned above are still to be achieved. Likewise, the miserable condition of human rights in Kashmir and Palestine witnesses a failure of OIC as it has not taken adequate steps or has not been able to convince India and Israel to join dialogue for resolving the disputes. The UN and OIC resolutions regarding Kashmir and Palestine conflicts are still unimplemented. Although a Special Declaration on Jammu and Kashmir was adopted in the 7th, 10th, and 11th sessions of OIC, all previous resolutions on Kashmir are still to be practiced.³⁴ A delay in implementing plans and policies has increased human rights violations in IIOJK at an alarming pace. Arguably, India has never allowed OIC fact-finding missions to visit IIOJK and has not responded favourably to OIC's offer of good offices.

In 2016, the organization paid attention to the deteriorated human rights and unabated killings in IIOJK and called for resolution through peaceful means. OIC Secretary-General Iyad Madani urged the international community to act as “the situation is getting worse rather than better, and this cannot continue.”³⁵ In 2017, the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers condemned India's acts of terrorism in IIOJK and demanded UNSC implement resolutions on the disputed territory.³⁶ Pakistan drafted a strongly worded resolution in 2018 against the violation of human rights in IIOJK by Indian authorities. The draft was presented in the meeting of OIC Contact Groups on Kashmir in New York on September 26, 2018.³⁷

In the annual session of 2019, OIC favoured resolution on the Kashmir issue through dialogue. President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Sardar Masood Khan clearly stated that OIC has set aside an oppressive Indian approach on the subject and supported resolution through dialogue. He added that "the Kashmir movement is gaining recognition in the international community with India's war crimes in Indian occupied Kashmir (IoK) being castigated. The only way forward is through dialogue between Pakistan and India."³⁸ On June 22, 2020, the Contact Group of OIC had held a meeting in the Republic of Azerbaijan against the backdrop situation in IIOJK. Participants of the forum called on UNSC to make India abide by its resolutions and dialogue about the best solution. The Contact Group also warned India and asked it to halt security operations against Kashmiris immediately. The group emphasized that India must respect human rights, refrain from changing the demographic structure of the Valley, and settle the conflict under relevant UNSC resolutions.³⁹

Now, it is a turn of OIC developments and initiatives to get people out of trouble in Israel-occupied Palestine, where Israeli forces and settlers are victimizing citizens. In 2013, OIC strongly condemned the attacks of Israeli settlers against innocent Palestinian, their properties, and holy places, which were equally supported by Israeli forces. It stressed UNSC for warning Israel to hold its immigrants and leaders accountable for their crimes. It also condemned Israel's refusal to allow UNESCO technical mission to investigate attacks on holy places in the city of Jerusalem. The organization welcomed UN resolution A/RES/68/12 adopted on November 26, 2013, to proclaim 2014 as 'the international year of solidarity with the Palestinian public.'⁴⁰ The OIC Summit, titled "United for Just Resolution" was hosted by Jakarta in 2016 at the request of Palestinian President Mahmood Abbas. Forty-nine members attended the session. President of Pakistan Mamnoon Hussain took a position and spoke categorically about the apartheid policies of Israel. He called for a just resolution for the plight of refugees in Palestine under UN General Assembly Resolution 194(III) of December 11, 1948. He included that UNSC must implement its resolution-1860 to ensure the security of victims in Palestine.⁴¹

In Istanbul, the Islamic Summit adopted a resolution in its seventh extraordinary session held on May 18, 2018. The adopted resolution aimed at highlighting the least development in Palestine. OIC encouraged Muslim states to raise a voice to protect the rights of Palestinians in UN sessions.⁴² On June 10, 2020, OIC made another attempt to restrain Israel's annexation policy. The Executive Committee of OIC has called on the international community, notably the UN General Assembly and UNSC, to take practical measures on an urgent basis to prevent Israel's colonial annexation of yet more Palestinian land. In the session, the member states assured that restoration of peace in Palestine would automatically lead to stability of the whole Middle East region.⁴³ Recently, Imran Khan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, has called upon OIC members in December 2021 to make a unified plan to help oppressed people in Palestine and IIOJK. In the 17th extraordinary session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, Imran Khan stated that Palestinians and Kashmiris are looking for a unified response from the Muslim world about their democratic and human rights. He

appreciated the efforts of OIC for restoring peace and stability in Afghanistan and suggested putting the same measures to cope with Kashmir and Palestine issues.⁴⁴

Israel and India have become more aggressive in exploiting the situation in IIOJK and Palestine. Israel has eyes on establishing its legitimacy as a Jewish state, and India has found ways to force Kashmiris to vacate the Valley. They have not defeated Kashmir and Palestine but all OIC members who have fallen victims to disunity. Historical examples of Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Libya are repeated. Egypt broke with OIC and Arab League in 1978 and established relations with Israel. This unilateral approach of Egypt towards Israel made defiant of the charters of OIC and UN, and the act was declared a violation of international law. In 1992, OIC met another failure when *Al-Quds* Committee was formed to initiate *Jihad* against Israel. Libya, Syria, and Iraq secured national interests in Arab politics and created factions within the Palestinian diaspora.⁴⁵ The same is the case with the performance of OIC in Kashmir.

Undoubtedly, Muslims in Kashmir and Palestine have suffered a lot under the authoritarian rule of India and Israel, respectively. There is a severe threat to their territorial integration, political stability, and regional peace. Violation of human rights in both regions is a wake-up call for the international community. It can launch multiple campaigns to warn India and Israel while using platforms of existing human rights organizations. While using the platform of OIC, the Muslim community should get united to address the causes of Kashmiris and Palestinians. They should make their organizations, significantly OIC, active for that purpose. The following can be adopted to get Kashmir and Palestine out of trouble.

First and foremost, all Muslim leaders should curb human rights violations in Kashmir and Palestine, and OIC should work on common objectives. Decisions made by the OIC committee should be binding for all member states. International media should not apply yellow journalism to promote terror in the world. It should not interpret Islam as a propagator of terrorism, extremism, and militancy; instead, it should highlight those Islamic teachings assuring universal peace. The media should find an unbiased way to present the dismal state of human rights in Kashmir and Palestine. International human rights organizations can make transparent decisions that will earn a sigh of relief for the victims. Muslim states should launch an international channel from the platform of OIC. It can help share unpleasant events with the whole Muslim community to act urgently.

All OIC member states should observe unity to define their collective stance against the violent nature of India and Israel. OIC leadership should influence UNSC and UN General Assembly to implement respective resolutions urgently so that Muslims in both regions can get rid of violent practices. Additionally, it can help them acquainted with recent events around the world. OIC members should foil Islamophobia attempts by making the Islamic teachings understandable for western society and other non-Muslims worldwide.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, the reluctance of OIC members has caused an irreversible loss to Muslim *Ummah*. The pathetic situation of Muslims in IIOJK and Palestine reflects that reality. OIC keeps on neglecting the atrocities committed by extremist Hindus against Kashmiris and the aggression of Jews on Palestinians. In that case, the day will come when Muslims would have lost their respective territories. Muslims in these regions will become a symbol of deprivation. There is a dire need for a quick and collective action to free innocents from the clutches of the narrow-mindedness of Hindus and Jews. There is always a silver lining in the dark cloud; therefore, OIC members should not lose heart; instead should take initiatives to ensure protection for human rights. It should move to international law enforcement agencies to mark limits of aggressors. In addition to that, the international community and media should condemn brutal acts against Muslims in India and Israel.

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NAGORNO-KARABAGH CONFLICT AND ROLE OF MAJOR POWERS: AN INTERNATIONAL LAW PERSPECTIVE

*Asma Rashid**

Abstract

Nagorno-Karabagh is a long-drawn-out conflict crafted around two competing positions identified as self-determination and state sovereignty. The political tactics of Stalin based on divide and rule and pan-Turkism in 1870 coupled with the Armenian genocide in 1914 fuelled the deep hatred and antagonism crammed between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the mountainous terrain of Nagorno-Karabagh. This paper attempts to comprehend the dynamic nature of this protracted conflict (in 2020) with the perspective of newly emerging regional alliances in the south Caucuses. It recognizes the convoluted regional interests that shaped a recipe of convergence between Azerbaijan, Russia, and Turkey that led to controlled chaos and one-sided settlement in Nagorno-Karabagh at the dispense of Karabagh Armenians. It addresses how this decisive war between Azerbaijan and Armenia transformed the landscape of future warfare.

Keywords: Self-determination, State Sovereignty, Armenian Genocide, Regional Alliances, Nagorno-Karabagh.

Introduction

The tranquillity in the south Caucuses came to an end after the embroilment of the protracted conflict over Nagorno-Karabagh since 1905, stemming from the decision made by Joseph Stalin. It initiated an eternal debate and confrontation concerning the historical, cultural, and religious linkages of the Armenian kingdom to Artsakh since 180 BC¹, which gave Karabagh Armenians the right to self-determination based on their distinct identity aligned with present-day Armenia. On the other hand, Azerbaijanis (Caucasian Albanians) claimed that Nagorno-Karabagh's autonomous status was abolished in 1991 after the collapse of the former USSR and became an administrative division of Ganja province. USSR disintegration led to the compartmentalization of the south Caucasus due to religion and ethnicity. The status quo in the area diminished as guarantees associated with a two-pillar policy of the USSR were no longer intact. The absence of any pivotal regional power and guarantees descended the region into protracted conflicts due to overlapping claims concerned with territorial integrity. The competing positions were further intensified and convoluted in the backdrop of

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communal violence (1988), genocide (1915), and propaganda based on religion and ethnicity, endorsed by regional powers (Turkey and Russian Federation) over subsequent years.²

Border clashes between two states (Armenia and Azerbaijan) from 1988 to 2020 resulted in massive casualties and sufferings on both sides that invoked a sense of insecurity and hatred, which provided political leaders with patriotic legitimacy for recurrent clashes over Nagorno-Karabagh. For mobilizing domestic enthusiasm, support, and sentiments required for internal political and administrative consolidation within these new and fragile republics, both states were tempted to indulge in these acts of international boasting and bravado. Discourse analysis of the situation can vividly deduce that offensive actions from both sides were justified by intentional reconstruction of facts for promotion of nationalistic narratives within general masses through electronic and print media.

The historical antagonism between two states could be the imposition of modern state formation and revolutionary ideologies based on symbology, language, and beliefs. To view the region from optics of timeless cultural forces would be a mere oversimplification; therefore, it would be better to view history as a product of the specific and frequent cognizant political intervention. The divergent history of Nagorno-Karabagh remained the product of modern nationalism for serving an unequivocal purpose of state-sponsored national identities and official ideologies. Lack of shared perception and recurrent dividing lines remained incessant in the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict. These themes, therefore, became vital subjects of strategic instability within the south Caucasus.

Against this background, this study investigates: Firstly, what is the international legal status of this conflict, and why is it problematic. Secondly, how this conflict transformed the nature of future warfare reiterated the importance of passive defence for the security of ground forces and civilians. Thirdly, what are the interests of regional powers in this conflict, and what are the military and strategic lessons for middle power states. It is a descriptive and explanatory study in its entirety. From a historical perspective to the contemporary situation, it is a thorough summary of the causal mechanism of events leading to a decisive victory in Nagorno-Karabagh.

Nagorno-Karabagh Conflict (2020)

In September 2020, Armenia and Azerbaijan again locked their horns over the black garden (Nagorno-Karabagh), but startlingly, it ended in a decisive victory of Azerbaijan.³ During the conflict, about 5,000 fatalities occurred, including 143 civilian deaths.⁴ Moreover, corresponding statistics given by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reiterated the death of 541 Syrian mercenaries of the Free Syrian Army (SNA).⁵ Though Azerbaijan officially refuted claims about the involvement of Syrian mercenaries in the region, UNHCR took notice of the situation and called for an immediate withdrawal of Syrian mercenaries from Nagorno-Karabagh.⁶ These

mercenaries were used as cannon fodder on the battlefield, thus, reducing overall expenses of war and securing military leverage for the state. This tactic was not new. Armenia had already employed such tactics in previous conflicts or clashes over Nagorno-Karabagh. In the western landlock exclave of Azerbaijan, a Russian Mi-24 helicopter was also shot down due to miscommunication between both sides, which resulted in the death of two Russian soldiers.⁷ Despite Russian and French support for Armenia, the conflict ended in a robust victory of Azerbaijan, leaving many questions unanswered. What were those factors that played a crucial role in ending this century-old conflict? Nonetheless, the critical role played by regional and global dynamics is also worthwhile to consider in this pursuit that started a debate over the nature of future warfare.

Legal Status of Nagorno-Karabagh Conflict

From an international legal perspective, the yardstick of the settlement history of any ethnic group is impertinent and inapposite. In such a case, the existing global edifice of states would run jeopardy and menace of fissures due to recurrently disputable ancient insights and accounts leading to a subjective approach towards prevailing ground realities.⁸ Therefore, the preliminary theme for international legal appraisal would be grounded on the association of Nagorno-Karabagh with inference to sovereignty at the time of the advent of modern international law. In November 1919, Karabagh People's Congress conceded with Azerbaijan after signing a temporary legal agreement. This agreement was endorsed and modified as a permanent accession agreement at the Paris Peace conference in 1920.⁹ Later, in 1960, due to economic hardships and Azerbaijani settlement programs, peasants of Nagorno-Karabagh sent several petitions to USSR authorities to pursue acceding with Armenia. However, due to the Cold War situation, USSR tried to maintain the existing political structure, avoiding any external backlash and breakup.¹⁰ The end of the Cold War, which resulted in the independence of Armenia and Azerbaijan in 1991, led to full-scale military escalation over Nagorno-Karabagh. Despite the ceasefire in 1994, violent skirmishes, scuffles, and deaths continued. Migration and displacement of a large chunk of masses across the border added fuel to the fire. They created an environment of interminable resentment, aggression, and strain between two neighbouring states.

Nagorno-Karabagh is internationally perceived as an integral part of Azerbaijan (*de jure* recognition) as neither the Treaty of Paris reverted nor the USSR altered the official status of this region (retroactive effect in international law). It was further endorsed by UNSC resolutions 874, 822, 884, and 853 on Nagorno-Karabagh. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group also tried to bridge differences by offering mediation and conciliation between both parties. Still, these attempts (over 30 years) ended in persistent deadlock.¹¹ In 2020, after initial skirmishes over Nagorno-Karabagh, the OSCE Minsk Group did nothing considerably for sorting out the situation. Since 1992, the OSCE Minsk Group failed to produce any comprehensive plan to resolve the protracted conflict. Different approaches among Russia, France, and the US towards a tangible solution led to mere condemnation of

violence, but nothing substantial came out of these negotiations. The Madrid principles provided by the Minsk Group were also not updated after 2009. This stagnation and ignorance towards sufferings born by the people, who were impatiently waiting for a final verdict on their future, became the source of confrontation in Nagorno-Karabagh. The international community remained unsuccessful in fulfilling its duties. Azerbaijan, therefore, took matters in hand and sorted them forcefully using military power and diplomatic influence of allies. This description appears safe and sound, but a closer analysis divulges several notches in this international legal narrative.

It is problematic as no due consideration was given to the endeavours of separatist Armenians living in this region. The right of self-determination has a considerable legal character enshrined in the UN Charter, but this conflict was dealt with optics of traditional international law.¹² The worldwide narrative on this account also overlooked the Vienna Convention on Laws of Treaties (1969) in blind pursuit of *Pacta Sunt Servando* (a classical axiom meaning 'agreements must be kept').¹³ Therefore, the complexity of interstate relations (based on heterogeneity) was not apportioned accurately. The reluctance to recognize revolutionary governments on the account that they came into existence by applying force is quite absurd in the 21st century, where the role of non-state actors cannot be denied.

Transformation of Future Warfare

A war (overlapping with Artificial Intelligence) based on Unmanned Assault Drones can provide inexpensive tactical advantages to small countries for precise guided missile attacks on adversaries. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (September 2020) vividly offered a view of future warfare and successfully displayed the importance of comprehending advanced warfare tactics backed by cyber, space, and electronic technology. This 44-day military clash rolled back the essence of ground forces and costly traditional and sophisticated weapons (tanks and radars) as they could easily be preyed on by high-altitude modern drone technology.¹⁴ Azerbaijan relied heavily on Turkish drones Bayraktar TB2s (Medium Altitude Long Endurance – MALE) to target Armenian military trenches and surface-to-air missile systems during this war.¹⁵ These drones targeted ground forces and defences of Armenia before they came to know what precisely confronted and attacked them. The supportive role played by electronic warfare systems further demolished and exposed Armenian bases and stockpiles. The element of the surprise based on drone fleets completely baffled military-strategic thinkers of Armenia. Azerbaijan quickly knocked out Armenia's old soviet-period military defences (devoid of modern technology). The Israel-made Unmanned Combat Ariel Vehicles (UCAVs) also played a decisive role in targeting Armenian radars and weapons. These UAVs (High Altitude Long Endurance – HALE) are for surveillance, inspection, and intelligence gathering.¹⁶

The military developments in Nagorno-Karabagh raised concerns about traditional strategies and the employment of AI-based weapons in future warfare. Several states are interested in purchasing or developing AI-based drones after assessing

their importance in shifting the entire dimension of an armed conflict. Initially, these drones were developed using specific artificial intelligence. Still, combat has started to create general artificial intelligence automated with the consciousness and realization of war tactics and strategies. These drones can decide their targets freely for inflicting maximum destruction over the adversary. Their potent calibre and advanced technology can completely transform the crux and structure of modern warfare, putting an end to the age of tanks and radars not immediately but ultimately.¹⁷

Nagorno-Karabagh Conflict and Passive Defence

The Nagorno-Karabagh conflict has also echoed the importance of passive defence. Passive defence is an art to secure strategic and military sites from an adversary. It is an instrument of reducing vulnerability on the battleground. In the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict, both sides, especially Armenia, lacked passive defence tactics, which resulted in massive casualties. In an age of emerging disruptive technologies, passive defence remains vital for securing and reinvigorating ground forces. It can help to camouflage military installations and logistics from adversary's thermal sensors, drone fleets, and satellite imagery by eliminating the possibility of divulges.¹⁸ The importance of electronic warfare in passive defence was brought to light by the Russian-made Poly-e-21 electronic warfare system during the confrontation in Nagorno-Karabagh.¹⁹ It successfully interrupted and demolished drone operations of Azerbaijan for four consecutive days.

The passive defence also concerns defence mechanisms, imparted and inculcated for the security of areas comprising the civilian populace. Armenia and Azerbaijan failed to meet the duties adjoined with this passive defence periphery as civilian commercial and residential areas were beleaguered and attacked in broad daylight. Armenian forces were accused of a missile strike in Ganja that resulted in 13 civilian casualties,²⁰ while Azerbaijan was implicated in an airstrike on the residential area of Stepanakert.²¹ The active military actions from both sides violated the 1907-Hague Convention that restricted unnecessary damage to civilian infrastructure during military confrontations.²² Similarly, both sides did not adhere to the principle of distinction (1925-Geneva Protocols) concerning using force against combatants and non-combatants.²³ Due to surmountable civilian sufferings, it violates the concept of just war under international law. The Nagorno-Karabagh conflict recapped the importance of passive defense strategies as their judicious and suitable application can secure strategic areas, logistics, and civilians of any state. While, if neglected, it would result in unnecessary torment and reparations for the state at war.

Interests of Regional Powers

Major regional powers, who undisputedly tried to maintain the status quo in their favour in the south Caucasus, are Russia and Turkey. The interest of Russia over the past three decades was converged on creating an interstate union for its satellite states (treating the EU as a prototype) under the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), but

it miserably backfired. On the other hand, Turkey treated the south Caucasus with an inherent pragmatism based on the revival of Ottoman glory and refutation of the Armenian genocide. Russia traditionally backed Armenia since 1991, while Turkey staunchly supported Azerbaijan (diplomatically, but not militarily). This time a clear divergence from the traditional position was observed, but the real quest is to answer 'why' behind all this one-sided settlement over Nagorno-Karabagh.

While posting Russian stakes, it is evident that Kremlin chose to evade turbulent waters in its immediate neighbourhood whose spillover could be dangerous, thus, resolving the conflict through mediation. However, it is not the explanation of divergence from the traditional position. There has been a lack of trust and a clash of Russian and Armenian leadership approaches. Armenian Prime Minister, Nikol Pashinyan, is viewed by Russia as an *hors d'oeuvre* of pro-US policies and politicians in Armenia.²⁴ In 2008, Pashinyan came into power after violent post-election protests bringing down Russian-backed politicians with the promise to introduce neo-liberal policies in Armenia. It raised eyebrows in Moscow, considering it a threat to regional strategy.²⁵

The war between Azerbaijan and Armenia, in this context, proved to be quite advantageous for Russia. It reiterated and reinforced the importance of Russia for the security of vulnerable Armenia and sliced down the domestic fervour and advocacy for Pashinyan, thus, paving the way for regime change in Armenia.²⁶ Besides, the growing intimacy between Baku and Moscow on defence and trade matters also played a part in Russian decisiveness. It restrained to use of force in the conflict over Nagorno-Karabagh. Baku spent nearly \$24 billion on the defence systems procured by Russia between 2008-2018, making it one of the biggest purchasers of Russian military arsenals in the world.²⁷ Russia perceives Ilham Aliyev, the President of Azerbaijan, as a strategic asset whose father was an ex-KGB officer and devotedly served the USSR during the Cold War. Keeping these circumstances in view, Moscow chose controlled chaos and a shift in the balance of power.

On the other hand, Turkey officially extended its military support to Baku for the first time, showing a visible transition from its traditional stand on Nagorno-Karabagh. This bold and apparent support primarily lay in Turkish dependence and investment in Azerbaijan's precious gas reserves through a southern gas corridor.²⁸ Moreover, the new phase of the pragmatic relationship between Baku and Ankara stood firmly on the principle of reciprocity. Both states signed a defence and strategic partnership agreement in 2017 and opened defence collaboration and exchange channels. Furthermore, the Azerbaijan State Oil Company invested heavily in Turkey. Baku also acquired drones at a moment of instability in the Turkish economy that proved to be a blessing in disguise. Therefore, the convergence of interests with Baku and antagonism against Yerevan fuelled Turkey's response in Nagorno-Karabagh.

According to eminent political analysts, the Turkish government under President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has adopted the political ideology of neo-Ottomanism.²⁹ It shows the ambition of Turkish authorities to have a regional footprint.

President Erdoğan has, therefore, meddled and intervened in varied regional disputes to consolidate the legitimacy of Turkey as a regional power. The ideals concerning the resurrection of pan-Turkic identity remained at the heart of these new developments in the region. Azerbaijan has also remained under Turkic values since the Ottoman Empire. It is regarded as a strategic asset in the south Caucasus to promote Turkish interests.

This *tour de force* served the purpose of both regional players at the dispense of Karabagh Armenia. The blend of Russian and Turkish interests, thereof, cemented and shaped the decisive victory of Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabagh. The shift in the balance of power is yet to be actualized after the withdrawal of Russian peacekeeping troops from Nagorno-Karabagh.

Military and Strategic Lessons

Firstly, the aerial threat to ground forces and armour seems insurmountable with disruptive technologies and the use of drones. It requires an evolution in defence and strategic thinking of middle power states.³⁰ Future wars cannot be fought with conventional thinking; therefore, it is time to equip state defence mechanisms with critical ICT infrastructure. Secondly, drones have become a cheap source of tactical superiority, as witnessed in Nagorno-Karabagh. These flying machines also assisted Azerbaijan in broadcasting videos and imagery of demolishing strategic assets of Armenia.³¹ The patronage of the government, perception of people, and morale of the military played a decisive role in setting the direction of conflict in Nagorno-Karabagh. The lesson learned, without a doubt, is based on creating favourable psychological dynamics using hybrid warfare techniques and ICT. The vivid role of propaganda and social media platforms indisputably prove crucial and central in contemporary conflicts.

Thirdly, for effective countermeasures against a drone attack and cyber warfare, middle power states should rigorously engage in developing electronic warfare capabilities. Limited capabilities in the electronic spectrum saved high-value strategic assets of Armenia for four consecutive days, echoing the importance of Electronic Warfare Command in the military.³² Fourthly, middle power states should focus on passive defence tactics to secure maximum strategic infrastructure, logistics, and civilian lives. With the advent of new offensive arsenals, a complete shift is required in the passive defence doctrine of middle power states. Fifthly, the element of surprise and decisive deception can turn the tide and outnumber the adversary. Unanticipated consequences will confuse the adversary and elevate the chances of a decisive victory. Sixthly, for wrecking an enemy, a strategy of exhaustion, appropriate timing, and assault on economic resources remained crucial in the 21st century. It will dissipate financial resources and dampen the strength of an adversary if used effectively. Azerbaijan evaded its enemy when the adversary was impoverished and survived with gloomy weapons due to internal economic struggle in the backdrop of the COVID-19 situation. Azerbaijan protracted the conflict and strained resources of Armenia that exhausted its will and ardour of its military to withstand difficulties on the battlefield. Lastly, the operational

environment should align with seamless transition across different spectrums of warfare based on the context of confrontation. Therefore, the integration of war theatres would be essential for successful military endeavours in the foreseeable future.³³

Conclusion

This paper highlighted the historical and legal roots of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabagh. The two fundamental pillars of modern nation-states, i.e., the right of self-determination and sovereignty, are competing against each other, opening deep pits and fissures in the existing global political edifice. The decisions and resolutions of international bodies that failed to alter the balance of power in the region forced Azerbaijan to take charge of the situation in 2020. Therefore, it attempted to rectify by using the yardstick of international law, disregarding and snuffing the endeavour of Karabagh Armenians in the pursuit of *Pacta Sunt Servando*.

The conflict of Nagorno-Karabagh led to a decisive victory for Azerbaijan. It gave a glimpse of future warfare based on specific and general artificial intelligence where human soldiers and sophisticated traditional weapon systems would be superseded and replaced. Strategic gaps between military thinking of both sides that led to excessive fatalities restated the importance of passive defence. The outdated tactics exposed strategic areas, logistics, and civilians to missile attacks that led to unnecessary reparation and damages. As found in Geneva Protocols and Hague Conventions, the fundamental principles of a just war were violated by both sides during the 44-day conflict over Nagorno-Karabagh. The interests of regional powers moulded the recipe for an abrupt and one-sided settlement of Nagorno-Karabagh. The Russian interest in regime change in Armenia and the creation of EAEU temporarily coincided with the interest of Turkey and Baku, grounded in the Caspian Sea, rich in oil and gas reserves. These intermingling interests led to controlled chaos and one-sided settlement. The conflict, however, produced several military and strategic lessons for intermediate power states engaged in a confrontation with their adjacent neighbours. The ineffectiveness of the international community in dispute resolution and successive failures of the UN in peaceful settlements led to serious queries over the future effectiveness of international law. Therefore, the conventional attitude of major powers towards revolutionary movements requires a paradigm shift in the 21st century.

International law should elevate its existing jurisdiction for regulating the use of emerging technologies, like swam drones, lasers, etc. The UN should develop an active mechanism ensuring distinction between combatants and non-combatants in active war zones to avoid unnecessary suffering and turmoil. Additionally, regional organizations should develop dispute settlement mechanisms to resolve prolonged and recurrent regional conflicts through peaceful diplomatic channels.

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COUNTERING TERRORISM AND REDUCING STRATEGIC UNCERTAINTY: ANALYSING ‘SHAPING’ MULTINATIONAL MILITARY EXERCISES

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Abstract

The post-Cold War period has witnessed a significant increase in ‘shaping’ multinational military exercises, which are considered a valuable instrument of defence diplomacy. Shaping multinational military exercises aim to encourage the partner military's role and adapt relationship to reduce strategic uncertainty. Since 2014, Pakistan's conduct and participation in multinational military exercises have increased significantly. Pakistan conducts four such exercises to reduce strategic uncertainty: recruitment, capacity-building, role-forming, and trust-developing. This article, therefore, argues that Pakistan pursues shaping multinational military exercises to mould the strategic thinking of both friends and potential adversaries to achieve foreign policy goals in a complex security environment.

Keywords: Defence Diplomacy, Counter-Terrorism, Operation Zarb-e-Azb, Multinational Military Exercises.

Introduction

The post-Cold War period began with the emergence of strategic uncertainty, defined by the end of bipolar world order and consequences of globalization. It emerged due to growing transnational threats ranging from terrorism, organized crime, ethnic and territorial conflicts, resource scarcity, migration, and unequal economic development to environmental degradation.¹ In the 1990s, American political scientist and former Assistant Secretary of Defence Joseph Nye observed that hard power (coercive) would not be enough to shape desired outcomes and address transnational threats requiring international cooperation. Instead, non-coercive measures or soft power would equally achieve foreign policy goals in an uncertain security environment. Nye defines soft power as “the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payments.”² An effective way of doing this is to use defence diplomacy, which centres on the premise that armed forces have a peacetime role in achieving the state's broader security and foreign policy goals. Defence diplomacy as an extension of soft power is an efficient, cost-effective mechanism for

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“confidence-building, trust creation, conflict prevention, and/or conflict resolution”³ in an increasingly uncertain environment. In this context, Multinational Military Exercises (MMEs) are an important tool of defence diplomacy to secure a state’s preferred outcomes through peaceful means than coercion.

The post-Cold War period has also witnessed a significant increase in MMEs, particularly shaping military exercises. Traditionally, military exercises are focused on war rehearsals or deterrence, but shaping military exercises aim to moderate military relations between the states. Military planners are anxious because transnational threats, their location, time, and state responses are mostly unknown in an environment where technology is fast-changing. Consequently, major powers use shaping MMEs to reduce strategic uncertainty.⁴ This paper, therefore, extends the concept of shaping MMEs to Pakistan’s military domain in the context of counterterrorism. Pakistan’s military uses shaping MMEs to encourage partner militaries to combat terrorism and insurgency in the region and reduce strategic uncertainty. This study proceeds in three parts. The first part proposes a conceptual framework to analyse Pakistan’s shaping MMEs. The second part describes Pakistan’s objectives to conduct shaping exercises, and the third part analyses Pakistan’s shaping MMEs since Operation Zarb-e-Azb (2014) to dismantle terrorist networks in North Waziristan.

Shaping Multinational Military Exercises (MMEs)

Military exercises, as peacetime activity, are like the bread and butter of soldierly life. States conduct multinational military exercises (training between two or more militaries) to increase interoperability, augment security and defence cooperation, and address common security challenges.⁵ MMEs are “military manoeuvres or simulated wartime operations involving planning, preparation, and execution carried out for training and evaluation.”⁶ These exercises test new procedures, operational concepts, and equipment. They also help collect information about allies and intelligence on potential adversaries.⁷ Besides their training objectives and benefits, MMEs can be used to achieve strategic and foreign policy goals, such as reassuring friends and allies, supporting defence reforms and standardization, and deterring potential adversaries. Above all, exercising jointly with another state’s military can serve to bolster mutual trust and friendship.⁸ MMEs create a platform for soldiers, sailors, and airmen to build rapport and trust through learning about each other’s unique skills, perceptions, and sharing of experiences.

Shaping MMEs are ‘influence operations’ that aim to change the military’s character, minimize strategic uncertainty and shape the regional security environment. Kyle Wolfley, in his research study, discusses how major powers shape MMEs with non-allies to reduce strategic uncertainties. He elaborated that states seek to manage strategic uncertainty, threat, and assistance to counter the threat through non-traditional shaping MMEs, i.e., recruitment, capacity-building, role-forming, and trust-developing. Firstly, recruitment exercises aim to join a defence agreement or coalition, consolidate relationships with allies, attract potential allies and partners as a form of

balancing against an adversary. Secondly, capacity-building exercises are conducted to enhance the capability of partner forces to safeguard their national security and promote regional stability. Thirdly, states use role-forming exercises to influence the role and practices of partner military in protecting the regime or deploy overseas for peacekeeping missions. Wolfley notes that capacity-building and role-forming exercises often draw similar language, such as building the capacity of partner military or bolstering the ability of partner state to assume greater responsibility for its security. However, role-forming exercises differ from capacity-building exercises in that the partner military is more advanced, and exercise involves more sophisticated tactics. Fourthly, trust-developing exercises are conducted to build trust and confidence between potential rival militaries to avert “inadvertent war through changing soldiers’ mutual perceptions from hostile to friendly.”⁹

The conceptual framework of this paper, thus, draws lead from the above-mentioned military exercises to analyse Pakistan’s shaping MMEs. Pakistan conducts such exercises by engaging allies, building the capacity of partner military, enhancing the role and practices of partner military, and developing trust with rivals or potential adversaries to minimize strategic uncertainty in a complex regional environment.

Counterterrorism and Shaping MMEs

Pakistan’s conduction and participation in shaping MMEs focus on accomplishing strategic goals. Pakistan’s strategic imperatives rest on restoring peace in Afghanistan, countering terrorism, and deterring India while strengthening relations with major powers, consolidating ties with friendly states, operationalising CPEC, and ensuring maritime security in the Indian Ocean region (IOR). In the post-9/11 era, Pakistan’s strategic environment has been shaped by uncertainties in Pakistan-US relations, deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan, threats of terrorism, India’s hegemonic designs in the region, and its efforts to destabilize Pakistan. These challenges have adversely affected Pakistan’s security paradigm, political stability, economic development, and social cohesion.¹⁰ Accordingly, Pakistan’s security and foreign policy focuses on challenges emanating from terrorism to its people and the region. In this context, the peacetime role of the military to achieve Pakistan’s foreign policy goals and reduce strategic uncertainty in its environment becomes significant.

It is important to note that the Pakistan Army has conducted a series of operations since 2001 to counter terrorism. During the early days, terrorists managed to revive their strongholds in erstwhile FATA and returned most of the time. However, Operation *Zarb-e-Azab* was unique in its conception and execution. The strategy of seeking, destroying, and clearing the area employed a more significant emphasis over holding the area to prevent the re-emergence of terrorists. The restoration of peace and order, repatriation of IDPs, management of Pak-Afghan border to avoid terrorists’ infiltration back into adjacent areas, conduction of counter-radicalization programmes, and implementation of security policy focusing on internal safety and stability of the state served as the key to operation *Zarb-e-Azb* effectiveness.¹¹ Operation *Radd-ul-Fasad*

was launched in February 2017 to tackle security threats in settled areas and keep erstwhile FATA free from a resurgence of terrorists.¹² Though there were challenges to consolidate the gains, both operations destroyed the command and control structure of terrorists on a large scale. In recent years, violence has seen a noticeable decrease.

Pakistan took critical decisions to restore peace and stability on political, administrative, and socio-economics fronts. The merger of FATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and peaceful elections in tribal areas are landmark steps taken.¹³ Moreover, the Pakistan Army, with the assistance of civil administration, initiated development projects, such as the construction of roads, schools, electricity and water supply schemes, and the provision of the internet to facilitate traumatized civilians in tribal districts.¹⁴ Pakistan has also skilfully employed defence diplomacy to pursue its foreign policy goals in an uncertain regional environment. The underlying assumption is that if Pakistan can overcome the challenges of terrorism and strengthen the security cooperation with partner states, it would lead to peace and security in the region, an essential requirement for the economic development of Pakistan, the region, and beyond through CPEC.

Pakistan's Shaping MMEs

a) Recruitment Exercises

Recruitment MMEs intend to attract potential allies and consolidate relations with friends to counter violent non-state actors. These exercises signal potential adversaries. Pakistan's increasing military and counter-terrorism cooperation with partners aims to reform the regional security environment. Pakistan views India's role in Afghanistan as a spoiler that seeks to destabilize the region. Pakistan Foreign Minister, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, stated that "after 9/11, the world saw that Pakistan had become a front-line state. While Pakistan was making sacrifices in blood and treasure, India was busy laying terrorist networks using its soil and spaces in [Pakistan's] immediate neighbourhood and beyond."¹⁵ Recruitment exercises signal Pakistan's increasing military cooperation with allies in this context. For example, the joint military exercises with China indicate that the two states cooperate more closely to counter terrorism and regional security.

b) Capacity-Building Exercises

The capacity-building MMEs focus on improving militaries' planning, doctrine, and interoperability to address the challenges of terrorism in respective states and regions. A significant objective of Pakistan's capacity-building MMEs is to offer its expertise in counterterrorism operations and enhance the level of training of partner's military. Such exercises also provide the Pakistan military a benchmark to test new operational concepts and equipment related to counterterrorism.

c) *Role-Forming Exercises*

Pakistan uses role-forming MMEs to encourage the role and practices of partner military in protecting regimes and citizens from threats of terrorism. For example, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia's joint military exercises strengthen the role of Saudi forces in maintaining national and regional security.

d) *Trust-Developing Exercises*

Pakistan conducts trust-developing MMEs to build mutual trust and confidence between Pakistan armed forces and foreign militaries. Through trust-developing training in peacetime, mutual perceptions of soldiers become friendly, thereby creating a climate of confidence and mutual understanding. Pakistan's policymakers are aware of the US and regional states' anxiety towards its role in the War on Terror. These misperceptions about Pakistan's counterterrorism operations undermine its strategic interests in the region. Acknowledging the advantages of shaping MMEs as a tool of defence diplomacy, Pakistan believes that the goodwill generated through shaping MMEs dispels the awkward feelings of mistrust of Pakistan's counterterrorism strategies and prevents confusion. A notable example of trust-developing MMEs is the Pakistan-Russia Friendship exercises, which significantly improve Islamabad-Moscow relations.

National Counter Terrorism Centre

Following Operation *Zarb-e-Azb*, the Pakistan military instituted several training programmes to augment its counterterrorism campaigns. Correspondingly, the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) was raised to train domestic law enforcement personnel and foreign soldiers.¹⁶ The training package revolves around developing troops' mental robustness transforming their combat orientation,¹⁷ thereby significantly increasing the capacity to counter terrorism. NCTC develops counterterrorism skills of soldiers to operate in built-up or urban areas, improving their understanding of the entire spectrum of the threat and refining weapon handling and firing skills.¹⁸ A Pakistan military official noted that "in our experience, this is not a battle with large forces. We have to learn how to fight in teams" to dislodge the terrorists from their hiding places and defeat them.¹⁹

Shaping MMEs at NCTC

Pakistan's counterterrorism training module is in high demand, and the Pakistan military has used such training standards as part of defence diplomacy quite effectively. So far, the Pakistan Army has delivered counterterrorism training to Saudi Arabia, Turkey, China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives at NCTC (see Table-1).

Table-1: Pakistan's Shaping MMEs at NCTC, Pabbi (Punjab)

Partner State	Exercise Codename	Date	Duration	Category of Shaping Exercises
Sri Lanka and the Maldives	Eagle Dash-I	January-February 2016	Two weeks	Capacity- Building
Saudi Arabia	Al-Shihab-I	March 2016	Two weeks	Role-Forming
Turkey	Ataturk-IX (held at Rattu & NCTC)	March 2016	Two weeks	Recruitment
China	Warrior-IV	October-December 2016	Eight weeks	Recruitment
	Warrior-V	January-February 2018	Two weeks	
Russia	Druzhba-III (Friendship 2018)	October-November 2018	Two weeks	Trust-Developing
Kazakhstan	Friendship 2017	November 2017	Two weeks	Capacity-Building
	Friendship 2021	August 2021	Two weeks	
China	Joint Anti-Terrorist Exercise (Jate-2021)	September-October 2021	Two weeks	Recruitment

(Source: Authors' compilation)

Pakistan conducted recruitment MMEs with China and Turkey at NCTC in 2016. With China, Pakistan's cooperation on counterterrorism has intensified in recent years, specifically after signing the CPEC agreement in 2015, a flagship project of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). China has witnessed militancy in the Xinjiang region, where there is a constant struggle between Uyghur separatists and Beijing. Also, banned terrorist groups like Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and TTP pose security threats to Chinese nationals working on CPEC projects in Pakistan. In this context, the recruitment MMEs are strategically significant for strengthening the Pakistan-China relationship, which provide more certainty over the region's nature and sources of threat. Pakistan-China 'Warrior' series of recruitment exercises focus on counterterrorism and its iterations held at NCTC.

On the concluding training exercise session, the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa said, "we will continue to offer our training services to defeat the menace of terrorism and bring peace." The Chinese Military Commander acknowledged "Pakistan Army for the highest standard of training and skills, an asset that China shall continue to benefit."²⁰ In 2021, the Joint Anti-Terrorist Exercise (JATE) was held in Pakistan under the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS). The first stage of JATE was conducted in respective SCO member states in July 2021, while the second stage was conducted at NCTC.²¹ The exercise under the SCO security apparatus aimed to strengthen Pakistan-China relations for maintaining regional peace and stability.

In recent years, Pakistan and Turkey have deepened their defense relations and security cooperation. Turkey has raised the Kashmir issue at various diplomatic forums while condemning Indian atrocities in IIOJK. General Umit Dundar, Chief of the General Staff of Turkish Armed Forces, in a meeting with COAS General Qamar Bajwa, agreed

to increase military cooperation, especially in training and the fight against terrorism.²² Pakistan and Turkey conduct joint military exercises under codename 'Ataturk.' Its ninth iteration was completed in 2016 at a high altitude in a deep snow environment and later in an urban setting at NCTC.²³ Besides building strong ties, the recruitment exercise with Turkey developed military and diplomatic support for Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts in the region.

In 2016, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Maldives trilateral exercise, Eagle Dash-I, was held at NCTC. This capacity-building MME took place amidst threats from ISIS. More importantly, this exercise attempted to message a common adversary to avoid threatening regional security by sabotaging activities. General Raheel Sharif, the then Pakistan's COAS, stated that such exercises "will consolidate our special relationship between three forces and help eliminate terrorism from the region." While emphasizing training exercises to develop partners' capacity to deal with terrorism and play a better role in bolstering international security, the former COAS stressed that terrorism needs "a coordinated global response from us all."²⁴

Pakistan also held capacity-building exercises with Kazakhstan military forces at NCTC. According to Nurlan Sabirov, a Kazakh military official, about 100 military personnel from both countries participated in counterterrorism exercises at NCTC in 2017. A participant noted that "special tactical training and several phases of exercises took place, including practicing storming buildings under the siege of mock terrorists."²⁵ Under the codename of 'Dostarym,' these joint exercises were held in 2017 in Pakistan and 2019 in Kazakhstan. Its third iteration in August 2021 focused on integrated synergy, interoperability, quick decision-making, and swift action at the tactical level. Special forces of both states took part in hostage and rescue, compound clearance, helicopter rappelling, and close-quarter battle exercises. It strengthened the capacity of Kazakhstan military forces to counter insurgent and terror threats effectively.²⁶

Pakistan regularly conducts role-forming MMEs with Saudi Arabia. Pakistan views Saudi Arabia as a strategic partner that has supported Islamabad's diplomatic, economic, and security interests. In October 2015, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia held their first-time joint counterterrorism exercise, al Shihab-1, at NCTC. It took place when the Saudi Arabia-led coalition was fighting against the Houthi rebels in Yemen. Islamabad joined to protect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Saudi Arabia but made it clear that it would not take part in a military campaign in Yemen. Under these circumstances, Pakistan provided counterterrorism training to a 57-member Saudi Special Forces contingent to counter the threat to Saudi Arabia. This role-forming exercise also aimed at protecting the Saudi regime without direct military intervention or deployment of Pakistan's forces in Yemen. On the closing ceremony of al-Shihab-I, the then COAS General Raheel Sharif stated that "any threat to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia will evoke a strong response from Pakistan."²⁷ The training included cordon and search operations, airdropping, and helicopter lifting against terrorists and their sanctuaries. The exercise provides "an opportunity to explore new avenues of cooperation to fight terrorism and enhance skills."²⁸ Thus, the

training was an attempt to strengthen the role of Saudi armed forces to provide security to the regime and protect its citizens from terrorist threats. It also demonstrates Pakistan's interest in ensuring the safety of the Gulf region.

Trust-developing exercises between Pakistan and Russia seek to build confidence and trust to prevent potential conflicts. Both states are affected by the instability in Afghanistan and, consequently, accelerated defence cooperation to ensure stability in the region.²⁹ With the unexpected emergence of ISIS in Afghanistan, Islamabad and Moscow started institutionalising their defense and security framework to counter the ISIS regional affiliates, such as the Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISKP). The counterterrorism exercises with Russian armed forces aim to develop mutual trust for matters related to regional security and diversify Pakistan's security relationships, reducing its dependence on the US.³⁰ The Special Operations Forces of the two states have conducted six training exercises under the codename 'Druzhba' (Friendship) exercises since 2016. Friendship exercises are conducted on an annual basis and focused on counterterrorism cooperation.³¹

Counterterrorism Training at Army Schools of Instructions

Pakistan Army also delivers counterterrorism training at different schools of instruction. For example, Pakistan-China recruitment exercises 'Warrior' at Kharian (2018) and Cherat (2019) focused on counterterrorism operations, combat preparation, and intensive training on organization and coordination.³² The recruitment exercise sought to minimize uncertainty in the complex regional environment. In 2021, Pakistan and Turkey recruitment exercise 'Ataturk-XI' was held at Tarbela. It included close quarter battle, cordon-and-search, fire and move techniques, helicopter rappelling, compound clearance, hostage and rescue operations.³³ Pakistan has also strengthened its military cooperation with African states in recent years. Pakistan and Nigeria have close security and defence cooperation. To enhance the capacity of the Nigerian military, the Pakistan Special Services Group (SSG) delivered eight weeks long counterterrorism training to Nigerian Special Forces in June 2017.³⁴

As mentioned earlier, Pakistan-Russia Friendship exercises provide the illustrative case study of trust-developing exercises. Two iterations of Pakistan-Russia Friendship exercises were held at Cherat (2016) and Tarbela (2020). In September 2016, Pakistan conducted its first bilateral military exercise with Russia, Druzhba-I, which shared the Pakistan Army's experience in the War on Terror. The exercise involved more than 200 military personnel from both states to conduct joint hostage rescue and cordon-and-search operations. Pakistan, on its part, was interested in learning the use of Russian military equipment suitable for Pakistan's counterterrorism operations, including combat aircraft and infantry weapons.³⁵ In August 2016, the Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces General Valery Gerasimov said that "the development of constructive relations between Russia and Pakistan is an important factor in ensuring regional stability and international security."³⁶ Islamabad attempts to reduce tensions and prevent any future conflict through these exercises,

Shaping MMEs Overseas

Since 2015, Pakistan has been participating in several shaping MMEs with allies and partner states to understand each other's capabilities and approach towards counterterrorism. Overseas MMEs help demonstrate Pakistan's military counterterrorism capabilities to partner states, learn skills from them in an operational environment, attract potential allies, develop trust and strengthen security ties with the international community.

Pakistan Army has conducted recruitment exercises in China and the US. In December 2015, Pakistan held a joint exercise, YOUYI-V, with China in 2004. Its fifth iteration focused on enhancing counterterrorism skills and conducted in extreme weather conditions of northern China to gain from each other experiences in the War on Terror.³⁷ In 2016, Pakistan held a nine-day recruitment exercise with the US under the codename 'Inspired Gambit' in South Carolina to share experiences, particularly combatting terrorism and countering IED operations.³⁸ In March 2021, Pakistan participated in a two-week training event, Ex-Shake Hands, in Sri Lanka. This capacity-building exercise aimed to share the rich experience of two armies against terrorism and enable Sri Lanka to combat internal security threats. Pakistan and Sri Lanka have shared perspectives on South Asia's peace and security issues.³⁹ In December 2017, Pakistan also participated in a role-forming exercise, al-Shehab-2, in Saudi Arabia, while conveying a message that "the two countries are close allies and in case either of the two countries faces any security threat, they will come to each other's help."⁴⁰

Pakistan and Russia have expanded the use of trust-developing MMEs. So far, three Friendship exercises have taken place in Russia in 2017, 2019, and 2021. In September 2017, the joint exercise, Druzba-II, was held in Russia. The two-week-long exercise involved more than 200 special forces from both states and focused on counterterrorism, hostage-and-rescue, and cordon-and-search operations. Russia's decision to continue with Friendship exercises despite New Delhi's unease and concerns demonstrated Pakistan-Russia mutual interests in the region.⁴¹ Since 2018, Pakistan has also participated in MMEs under RATS (SCO). These exercises were held in Russia under the codenames of 'Peace Mission 2018', 'Centre 2019' and 'Caucus 2020'. These exercises bolster the counterterrorism capacity of Central Asian states and allay their mistrust regarding Pakistan's role in the counterterrorism campaign.

Naval Shaping Exercises

The Indian Ocean is important for Pakistan regarding energy supply, trade, and security. Pakistan Navy regularly conducts shaping MMEs to counter non-traditional security threats in the maritime domain. For instance, in the northern Arabian Sea, a recruitment exercise under the codename 'Sea Guardians-2020' was held between Pakistan's and Chinese Navies to increase interoperability, create a safe maritime environment and augment the capabilities of both navies to address maritime terrorism and crime jointly. The People Liberation Army reportedly stated that it

would consist of training at the port and joint naval drill, including discussions, exchanges, workshops, joint patrol, and tactical simulation.⁴² China's Ambassador to Pakistan, Yao Jing, commented that the exercise "fully reflects the good wishes of the Chinese and Pakistani Navies in jointly building a community of shared maritime destiny, and demonstrates the confidence and capability to guard marine peace and security jointly."⁴³

To reduce the uncertainty associated with unpredictable threats in the Indian Ocean, Pakistan has been conducting multinational naval exercise 'Aman' (Peace) every alternate year since 2007. Pakistan uses this recruitment exercise to strengthen military collaboration, draw potential allies for maritime security cooperation and reduce potential threats in IOR. Pakistan Navy held Aman-2017 in the northern Arabian Sea. Navies from 37 countries participated, including Australia, China, Indonesia, Turkey, Sri Lanka, the UK, US, Russia, and Japan. Russia's Severomorsk anti-war ship, Altay Tug Boat and Dubna tanker, China's 24th escort naval fleet with its missile destroyer Harbin, guided-missile frigate Handan, and supply ship Dongpinghu were also part of the exercise. Around 700 troops participated in Aman-17. Pakistan Navy demonstrated their counterterrorism capabilities with "a dramatic demonstration of a shore-based hostage rescue, involving parachutes, hovercraft, drones, and much gunfire."⁴⁴ This recruitment exercise aimed to attract foreign navies for training and education purposes and promote Pakistan Navy as an effective instrument of the state's foreign policy. Pakistan's maritime security challenges, such as maritime terrorism, drug trafficking, and piracy, are multidimensional and multifaceted; hence naval cooperation is imperative to counter emerging threats.⁴⁵

According to analysts, the need for maritime support for CPEC and growing Indian hegemonic designs in the region were the distinct subjects of Aman-17, sending strong political signals to New Delhi.⁴⁶ In the Aman-2021 naval exercise, 46 states dealt with maritime security and counterterrorism strategies. It put forward Pakistan's proposal of collective maritime security by developing partnerships amongst foreign navies to counter asymmetric threats to trade and energy security in IOR. According to Mary Hunter, the increased number of participants in the exercise indicates "an important positive development in perceptions of military powers towards the Pakistani military concerning terrorism." Commenting on Pakistan's role in countering non-traditional threats in the maritime domain, Hunter noted that Pakistan Navy is "facilitating multilateral counterterrorism training and discussions."⁴⁷ Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Nadeem Raza also expressed that the exercise "will promote regional cooperation and stability, greater interoperability and united resolve against terrorism and crimes in the maritime domain."⁴⁸ In November 2014, a capacity-building exercise, 'Taawun al Behr' (maritime cooperation), was held to manage non-traditional security threats,⁴⁹ minimizing IOR uncertainty.

Air Shaping Exercises

Pakistan Air Force conducts recruitment exercises with China, the US, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey to build stronger military relations and support Pakistan's objectives in the counterterrorism domain. The Shaheen series of exercises, since 2011, are being held annually between Pakistan and China. In September 2017, Shaheen-VI was conducted in China to perform rehearsals of air-to-air combat, close-air support, and air-to-ground operations.⁵⁰ In September 2019, Shaheen-VIII was held in China, with nearly 50 warplanes participating from both sides.⁵¹ The Chinese Air Force troops also participated in Shaheen-IX held in Pakistan. Recognizing the Bholari airbase for its strategic significance, the then Pakistan Air Force Chief, Air Chief Marshal Sohail Aman, commented that it plays a "key role in safeguarding the CPEC project."⁵² In August 2016, Pakistan Air Force participated in Red Flag exercises in Washington. It aimed to strengthen Pak-US military relations. Major General Rick B Mattson noted that "Pakistan brought a unique set of skills to the exercise, from their willingness to collaborate to their motivation to get the most out of the training scenarios."⁵³

In October 2017, a multinational exercise ACES was conducted at the Air Power Centre of Excellence (ACE). The Royal Saudi Air Force and Turkish Air Force contingents participated in the two-week-long exercise. Eight states participated in the exercise as observers. The recruitment exercise aimed to bolster cooperation between air forces and strengthen modern concepts focusing on counterterrorism operations. Turkish team leader observed that "this international exercise was met with the same standard as the exercise of other countries of the world; sharing this professional knowledge and combat experience are true manifestation" of the Pakistan and Turkey relationship.⁵⁴

Conclusion

This paper has explored Pakistan's shaping MMEs to reduce strategic uncertainty. Given the importance of defence diplomacy, Pakistan has complemented its counterterrorism operations by shaping MMEs to minimize strategic uncertainty in a complex security environment. Pakistan Army is eager to share its experiences to enhance the capacity of partner military while improving the capabilities of the Pakistan military by learning new counterterrorism skills. Shaping MMEs also provide unique opportunities to develop mutual trust and increase familiarity between armies to prevent conflict and avert war. Besides, shaping MMEs bolster military relationships and influence partner military roles and practices to address strategic uncertainty. Furthermore, Pakistan's conduction of shaping MMEs demonstrates its willingness and commitment to pursue multilateral collaboration against non-traditional security threats and hence, enhance regional and international security. Finally, shaping MMEs have become a valuable tool for Pakistan to improve its international standing and shape the regional security environment.

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POWER POLITICS OF SPORTS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND ITS EFFECTS ON CRICKET

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Abstract

Sports can influence people like all other cultural activities. They act as a diplomatic tool to alleviate tensions and improve ties between states. Millions worldwide follow their favourite sports passionately; however, states and leaders sometimes exploit these feelings to further their political agenda. There are examples of cricket diplomacy when relations between states (Pakistan and India) were tense, and it helped normalize the situation but never securitised itself. Securitization of sports is a recent phenomenon that, unfortunately, has marred the beauty of cricket. Political theorists suggest that existing issues of even low politics can hold more sway and attention among the masses if proponents of these issues succeed in securitizing them. Hence, by securitizing an innocuous subject like cricket, matters of low politics have been dragged into the domain of high politics. The recent abandonment of cricket tour to Pakistan by the New Zealand cricket team is an example of getting high politics into sports. This article, therefore, explores the dynamic power of sports in international relations besides analysing the role of high politics in cricket. It accentuates that punishing a country politically by depriving it of hosting international teams can disservice cricket, though it is a diplomatic tool for peace.

Keywords: Sports, Cricket Diplomacy, Sporting Nationalism, Securitization of Cricket.

Introduction

States interact with each other to enhance cooperation and thrash out their differences. State leaders play an essential role in giving foreign policy directions to achieve desired objectives. Realist scholars argue in favour of power, which is mainly a force augmented by military strength, the economy, geography, population, and political stability.¹ According to the realist perspective, conflict is usually expected between states, but sports diplomacy is not a preferred foreign policy tool. Compared to realists, liberals take alternative approaches, including sports diplomacy. With the advent of the communication revolution, many communication tools in diplomacy are available to states today, such as public diplomacy.² However, power has often been used for influence; that's why Joseph Nye divided the power into hard and soft categories, given the immense importance of authority in international relations.³

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In today's interconnected world, sports can bring the estranged nations together on a football field or cricket pitch, and leaders can discuss controversial issues in informal settings.⁴ Foreign policy, politics, and culture are some soft power facets. Thus, according to Nye, soft power can shape foreign policy powerfully and is more cost-effective than sheer force.⁵ Cricket, Ping Pong, and Wrestling diplomacy show that sports can be a foreign policy tool. The importance of sports in bringing nations and communities together has been acknowledged by politicians, journalists, scholars, and musicians and singers, such as U2 Band's lead vocalist Bono.⁶ Former UN Secretary-General has also recognized the ability of sports in bringing states together through mega sporting events like Football World Cup and Olympics. Prejudices and stereotypes can be evaded through positivity from sports events.⁷ Despite the positive impact of sports, political considerations, power politics, and rivalries have marred many sporting events.⁸

Boycotts have spoiled the Olympics and various other sporting events, including cricket. Even athletes have shown their resentment about political situations in their countries, such as raising fists by US athletes in a black power salute while standing on the podium in the 1968-Mexico City Olympics.⁹ According to some scholars, sports reflect a nationalist spirit, which can turn violent when going gets tough inside a sporting arena. It harms international relations. In his extensively quoted article, George Orwell wrote that "serious sport has nothing to do with fair play. It is bound with hatred, jealousy..., and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence; in other words, it is war minus shooting."¹⁰ Though this argument stretches sports towards a realist perspective, it has an element of truth as states use sporting events to showcase their soft and hard power.

Securitization of sports is a new phenomenon in Subcontinent. It has brought issues of low politics under the spotlight. Cricket, traditionally a tool of diplomacy, has been brought into high politics through securitization. The concept of securitization was developed by Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, Jaap de Wilde, and others of the Copenhagen School of thought. Security in the context of states is freedom from threat and the ability to maintain their independence. These issues pertain to the realm of high politics. But bringing sports into high politics is the securitization of the problems that are not politics themselves. Recently, cricket has been used as a tool (sometimes brazenly) to extract political mileage and justify the jingoistic stance by ultra-nationalist in India.

Unfortunately, sporting nationalism has been associated with cricket in India by creating an atmosphere of insecurity and feelings of being threatened. Sports can provide a political motivation, bringing nationalism associated with sports.¹¹ Saga of New Zealand cricket team's abandonment of Pakistan's tour speaks of machinations emanating from sporting nationalism. Fake email and Facebook IDs were used to threaten the New Zealand team, which cancelled the tour to Pakistan after its arrival and minutes before the first one-day international cricket match at Rawalpindi.¹² India started the process of securitizing cricket to enforce sporting sanctions against Pakistan after the Kargil war when the Indian Cricket team was banned from visiting Pakistan.¹³

Since then, cricket has been the first victim whenever the temperature gets high as far as Pakistan-India relations are concerned. India unilaterally banned Pakistani cricketers from participating in the Indian Premier League (IPL) and cricket's governing body. International Cricket Council (ICC) has chiefly paid lip service to Indian nefarious attempts to securitize cricket. It may be due to ICC's corporate interests and the lure of the vast Indian market, which multinationals (MNCs) and states want to tap even at the cost of fair play in sports.

In India, cricket has inextricably linked with jingoism and warmongering. Before the 1996-Cricket World Cup quarter-final between Pakistan and India, Indian media went into a frenzy and presented it as some war with cricket pitch as a battlefield; a Gujrati newspaper even portrayed players as soldiers with uniforms and guns.¹⁴ Norman Tebbit, a conservative British parliamentarian, argued in 1990 that South Asian immigrants should support the English cricket team instead of Pakistan or India as proof of their loyalty and commitment to the UK. Bal Thackeray, an Indian politician, came up with his version of the Tebbit test in the 1990s. He urged Muslims in India to support the Indian cricket team against Pakistan as proof of their loyalty by saying, "I want them with tears in their eyes every time India loses to Pakistan."¹⁵ In the backdrop of these events, the cancellation of New Zealand's tour to Pakistan was not merely due to security reasons. Cricket that ought to be played on the field has been brought off to damage cricket itself.

Dynamic Power of Sports

Sports have been a preferred pastime of millions of people around the world. Many people follow their favourite team with fanatic zeal. Sometimes ardent fans come to blow inside and outside the sporting arena for a result they do not like. Still, sports contribute to cultivating good relations between rival teams and nations these teams represent. Despite sports' role in creating sociability, sport can deteriorate relationships between two states. The Soccer War case between Honduras and El Salvador is in point. Harbinger to this war was an inflow of migrants from El Salvador to Honduras who came to Honduras for a better future. Relations between the two states were already simmering when they had to play three qualifying matches for Football World Cup in 1969. When these teams played their third and final qualifying match, Al Salvador cut off all diplomatic relations with Honduras and started bombing neighbour. Since then, this war has been referred to as La Guerra del Futbol – The Soccer War.¹⁶

Rivalry in football between the Netherlands and Germany in the late 1980s played a significant part in exacerbating the tense situation between the two nations. Firstly, Ronald Koeman in 1988 used a shirt (footballers swap their shirts after a match in a goodwill gesture) of German player, Olaf Thon, to mock German spectators. Then again, in the 1990-World Cup, a row between Frank Rijkaard and Rudy Voller resulted in the expulsion of both players from the football field. These two incidents show how a wild football field behaved and highlighted embedded cultural differences and historical disagreement that subsequently worsened relations between the two states.¹⁷

Sports have been a source of relieving tensions and promoting goodwill among nations. Famous Christmas Truce during World War I occurred to play a football match between soldiers who before truce were blowing any moving thing in front of their trenches into smithereens by machine gunfire.¹⁸ Occasionally, a country needs a particular sporting event to talk on contentious issues; even the fixtures are designed for this purpose. A case in point is Ping Pong diplomacy between the US and China. This sporting event facilitated President Nixon's visit to China and thrashed out their differences while enjoying the game. This visit ended the estranged isolation of China from an American perspective, helped in pulling out US forces from Vietnam, and laid the foundation of future Sino-US cooperation.¹⁹ Former President of Pakistan, General Zia ul Haq, also used a cricket match to alleviate tension between Pakistan and India. He visited India and witnessed a cricket match at Jaipur. The purpose was to use cricket diplomacy to thaw in a tense environment because of a military exercise Brasstacks by India near the Pakistan border.²⁰

Five American wrestlers and the same number of officials visited Iran in 1998 to participate in International Takhti Cup. It was the most significant interaction between the US and Iran after 1979-Iranian Revolution. The spectacle of American flag hoisting in Iran was necessary because, before this wrestling tournament, the American flag was not hoisted in Iran but burnt.²¹ North Korea (and its ruler Kim Jong Un) was one of the axes of evil in the eyes of former US president George Bush. There were no diplomatic relations between the two states. Kim Jong Un, a fan of the American NBA and Dennis Rodman, wanted to play basketball with Rodman. North Korean leader was willing to allow Rodman and his all-American TV crew into his country because of basketball's popularity. This visit by an American athlete was a significant diplomatic feat as it provided an opportunity to see through the opacity of North Korea and its leader.²²

When Japan and South Korea jointly hosted the 2002-World Cup, they initiated dialogue to iron out their historical differences. At the same time, the organization of the event itself exposed the underlying tension, differences in an official mascot, and bickering on the location of matches. However, the Olympics were a great leap forward in increasing friendly ties with loose visa regulations and signing bilateral agreements. In 2004, Korean Overseas Information System acknowledged that jointly hosting the Olympics has helped initiate increased dialogue on political matters.²³ Athletes can bring the lesser-known ethnicities and nations on the world map more effectively; George Weah (Liberia), Kathy Freeman (Aboriginal Australian), and Novak Djokovic (Serbia) are examples of sports' power in displaying a rare talent of smaller communities and nations on the world stage.²⁴

A sporting event can project a nation's image best possible. It allows spectators to see a particular country's cultural and natural beauty. *Tour de France* is one of the oldest cycling tournaments globally, enabling spectators to enjoy the race, beautiful landscapes, towns of historical importance, and castles in France. It has been a vital instrument in the image-building of a state.²⁵ Similarly, sporting events also help remove

negative stereotypes about a host nation. These events project the country's soft image, paying dividends in increased tourism and business; the Sochi Olympic Games of 2014 project Russia's soft power. Vladimir Putin showed to the world that even during crisis and doubts about his foreign policy goals, he could use the event for image-building of Russia.²⁶ The UN has also acknowledged sportsmen and women's star-power in building worldwide relations. It has structured a Sports Ambassador program in which famous athletes act as Sports Ambassadors to promote peace and friendship in the world. Muhammad Ali, Pele, Carl Lewis, and Maria Sharapova are some of the athletes who have been Sports Ambassadors of UN.²⁷

Sports – A Tool of High Politics

Sports have been a source of thawing tense relations among states, rarely used to coerce a nation; sometimes, it is used as a propaganda tool. Hitler used the Berlin Olympics of 1936 to showcase German racial superiority. Recently, the decision of the New Zealand Cricket Board to abandon a tour to Pakistan was a rare sporting and diplomatic occurrence. It abruptly cancelled the tour minutes before the first one-day match kicked off between Pakistan and New Zealand. In a press statement, security reasons were cited for the abandonment of the tour. It stated that “following an escalation in the New Zealand government threat level for Pakistan, and advice from New Zealand Cricket Security Advisors on the ground, it has been decided that BLACKCAPS will not continue with the tour.”²⁸

The tour's abrupt cancellation was a bolt from the blue for Pakistan and against all the norms and courtesies of bilateral relations. After all, an agreed-upon tour abandoned at the last minute was not cricket. It smacked a conspiracy against Pakistan cricket as Pakistan's Information Minister stated that fake news (generated by India) led to shocking tour cancellation, describing it as a part of hybrid warfare against Pakistan. According to the minister, Proton Mail was used to generate a threatening email. On August 19, 2021, a Facebook post was circulated from a fabricated account (Ehsan Ullah Ehsan, a former TTP spokesperson) asking the New Zealand government and Cricket Board not to send their team to Pakistan. Abhinandan Mishra, the Bureau Chief of *Sunday Guardian*, wrote an article two days later based on the fake Facebook post and claimed that the New Zealand cricket team might face a terrorist attack in Pakistan.

Moreover, the wife of Martin Guptil, a renowned New Zealand star batsman, received an email on August 24, 2021, which threatened to kill the batsman during the tour to Pakistan. The account was created at 01:05 am on August 24, 2021, and an email was sent on the same day at 11:59 am. Pakistan's Information Minister also pointed out that the email was generated intentionally as no other activity was reported from the same account. Interpol Wellington was informed on September 18, 2021, about the threatening email by New Zealand Police. Despite these negative tactics, the New Zealand team arrived in Pakistan on September 11, 2021. However, the New Zealand team and government abruptly abandoned the tour on September 17, 2021, citing credible security threats without sharing details. The threatening email was sent from an

associated device in India by using a VPN showing the IP address of Singapore minutes after the creation of ID.²⁹ It was a unique case in which foreign elements were involved against the cricket tour to tarnish the host country's image. Another view in Pakistan blames the US and West for bringing their political agenda into cricket, maligning Pakistan for supporting the Afghan Taliban.³⁰

Many believe that the intelligence of a possible attack on the New Zealand cricket team came from Five Eyes, an intelligence alliance. New Zealand authorities deemed it credible, leading to phone calls between two cricket boards and both states' prime ministers.³¹ A report of the congressional subcommittee on Intelligence and Special Operations mentioned Five Eyes, an alliance to counter China and Russia. It also proposed membership extension to like-minded states like Japan, Korea, India, and Germany. In 2020, India, Japan, and Five Eyes states appealed to technology-based companies for backdoor permission for encrypted smartphone applications.³² This scenario depicts more than a security threat to the New Zealand cricket team; it may be a sinister plot to blemish Pakistan cricket to tarnish the overall image of Pakistan. Unfortunately, the victim is the game of cricket, which is being followed by millions passionately. States have been using sporting events to show their soft power but using a sport for power politics and depriving the people of entertainment is rare.

Conclusion

Cricket has united people worldwide for their love of this game. From Papua New Guinea to Scotland, they enjoy playing and watching it. It has been a part of Track-II and III diplomacy between Pakistan and India. Unfortunately, Indian intransigency and belligerent attitude have remained an example of 'war minus the shooting' despite serving as a sign of social harmony.³³ Sports play a massive role in the daily life of the people like other social and cultural activities. They speak a universal language that everyone understands. Bringing politics into sports is against the sporting spirit they try to instil in players and spectators. The decision of the New Zealand Cricket Board to pull out of the tour at the last moment, citing a murky security reason, was a great disservice to the game of cricket. The tour was cancelled so barefaced that it demanded ICC investigation. There was a deliberate attempt to deprive Pakistan of cricket matches by portraying it as unsafe. It was not merely a cancellation of the tour; pulling off from the tour while citing a security reason tarnished the state's reputation and damaged Pakistan's efforts in reviving the hosting of international sporting events in the country. The way Indian media behaved immaturely after the tour cancellation implies an organized campaign to defame Pakistan.

All sports, including cricket, are innocuous activities to entertain the spectators and viewers. Games are supposed to teach the spirit of sportsmanship and goodwill, but to bring in politics at the state level reduces sporting bodies into pawns, ultimately damaging the sports. The need of the hour is to delink sports, especially cricket, from politics at the state level and play this beautiful game on the field rather than manipulating it through off-the-field activities.

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CHANGING US WAR POLITICS IN SOUTHWEST ASIA AND REGIONAL COOPERATION THROUGH CPEC

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Abstract

The changing dynamics of international politics with US military withdrawal from Afghanistan have affected the Southwest Asian geopolitical landscape. While international players have their interests, they involve regional and neighbouring states in their actions frequently; thus, regional complexities arise. Pakistan was engaged in peaceful execution of the US exit strategy from Afghanistan; however, it demanded an overall shift in policy in a changing regional environment. Besides, Pakistan's strategic and economic cooperation with China through CPEC has further enforced its prospects to be a significant player in regional politics. Pakistan's challenges are countering India's regional hegemonic designs and aggressiveness in Indian illegally occupied Kashmir, maintaining a neutral stance over the Iranian front vis-a-vis Saudi Arabia, and addressing the TTP factor. Despite international players' competition, Pakistan has multiple options for attaining balance through CPEC and shifting from competition to cooperation. This paper, therefore, analyses international players' security interests in the region and suggests openings for Pakistan through CPEC considering Regional Security Complex theory.

Keywords: CPEC, Regional Security Complex Theory, JCPA, the US, Afghanistan.

Introduction

Southwest Asia has been a centre of international politics due to its unique geopolitical and geographic connectivity with rich oil resources and untapped trade routes. It is a hotbed of international to intra-regional interests and conflicts, thus putting the region under constant pressure. Besides the role of multinational players, regional dynamics are also into play. Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia have been exerting regional politics. However, the presence of great powers has remained evident since the Great Game left its mark in the region. Uncertainty in inter-state relations results from historical conflicts caused by extra-regional players, mainly the US, especially after World War II.

Bringing this analysis to current upheaval is also credited to US hawkish policies towards Iran sanctioning senior leaders of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) for alleged involvement in Yemen and Syria, and Lebanon, harming US interests in the region.¹ This conflict of uncertainty further increased with Iran's

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shooting of US drones, claiming it infringed Iranian airspace and brought the chances of war closer, thus making the Strait of Hormuz a hostile zone. President Donald Trump's unilateral decision of withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Programme of Action (JCPOA) in 2018, an agreement that Iran had reached with P5+1 (China, France, Russia, the UK, the US, and Germany) on July 14, 2015, also resulted in a deadlock situation.² JCPOA was considered a breakthrough in settling US-Iran hostile relations as Iran had committed to limit its nuclear program under the agreement. However, this move halted the process of peace and trade between both states, ultimately creating a challenging situation in the Gulf region, engaging regional powers, including Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, India, and Iran.

Barry Buzan and Ole Waever explain the Regional Security Complex theory while stating that geographical proximity exercises complex relations. It is not only geographical proximity that compels for inter-connectedness; international players' politics also forces them to strive for their interests, thus making the situation more complex. For instance, Saudi Arabia and the US intervene in the region. They engaged neighbouring states like Pakistan, China, and Afghanistan for different reasons, demonstrating a complex security feature through domestic, regional, and global levels.

Saudi Arabia has overwhelmed the divided Arab world against Iran, which has been possible with consistent US support. Saudi Arabia's animosity against Iran dates to the end of 1979 on nuclear policies and sectarian conflicts in Syria and Yemen. Similarly, over a deadlock with Iran, the Trump administration bypassed the rules allowing the Saudi government to strengthen its armed forces, pushing the region towards escalating nuclear proliferation, especially between Saudi Arabia and Iran. This further spills over its effect on regional politics transforming Pakistan's role from a pacifying to diffusing tension with Iran and addressing Saudi Arabia's anxieties. Pakistan has its security challenges, and in the current deadlock, Pakistan would persuade Iran to avoid involvement in the Yemeni situation because the geostrategic environment around Pakistan is already perplexing, i.e., India on one side and Afghanistan on another. Pakistan cannot afford another dire state of affairs.

Changing International Politics and Regional Geopolitical Dynamics

From different perspectives, the US-Iran impasse and international politics directly implicate the regional security environment. Pakistan's relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia spread over decades to defuse the tension in the region. Pakistan opted for staying impartial but executed diplomacy to settle the war in Yemen. However, Pakistan's financial crisis pushed the country to ask for aid from Saudi Arabia. Similarly, \$ 6 billion aid to Pakistan and Qatar's investment show this inclination. Rupert Stone (2019) expresses that though Pakistan would not take sides despite pressure from Saudi Arabia, attaining balance with Gulf Cooperation Council states. It reflects that economics is an important factor in determining the future of conventional responses.

Meanwhile, Pakistan realises the dynamics of India's regional strategy spreading to West Asian countries, i.e., Iran and Afghanistan. India has maintained good

relations with Iran while prioritizing its energy security and balancing good relations with the Arabian Gulf states. Having good relations with the US, India has become its strategic-ally. Indian foreign policy discourse is based on the multi-alignment model, which entails that India has to align with many partners or states in a multipolar world. With hegemonic goals to checkmate China and maintain threat perception against Pakistan, India expanded its diplomatic missions in Kabul through investments in road infrastructure and developmental projects. However, India lacks geographical access to Afghanistan, limiting its options compared to Pakistan. It is one motive through which the port of Chabahar project was signed between India and Iran in 2003, evading Pakistan. The seaport offered an alternate transit passage to Afghanistan and worked well for India in trade and regional dominance.

Iran is an essential part of India's energy security matrix for exporting oil much lower than alternative sources. Tehran's total oil supply to India is 10% of complete Indian oil requirements.³ Its desire to spread through Central Asia is another long-term objective. The development of the Chabahar project and its success are critical factors in checking China's growing investment in Gwadar Port under the BRI. From an international aspect, Chabahar port serves India's geopolitical strategy, ultimately serving the US interests in containing China. India has played on geopolitical grounds through international and regional alliances with ultimate gain on securing energy resources and regional dominance ranging from economic to strategic levels. Unfortunately, Pakistan's foreign policy base depends on financial necessity due to the worst economic uncertainty.

International politics in Southwest Asia has to have its effects in South Asia. It depends on regional states to manoeuvre and work for their national interests. However, the current scenario has altered the geopolitical landscape of South Asia. Despite convergence between the US and India over checking China's role, the US has drifted with Iran and China into a trade war. It has narrowed down options for India as the US would not consider India to exploit Chabahar port keeping its long stalemate with Iran. Progress has slowed down despite the US granting a limited-time exemption to Chabahar port. India is worried about the US not extending the exemption period for oil export through Chabahar port. Despite being partners in energy and trade, India has submitted to the US not sailing quickly compared to the rapid progress made on Gwadar Port. Compared with Gwadar port, India's dream to make Chabahar port at par with the former is not yielding results. Similarly, the operational environment has toughened over the port due to fear amongst the stakeholders. In this situation, India's ability has gone further limited for slashing its budget up to 50% for the development of Chabahar port.

India's energy security, which is mainly dependent on the situation in the Middle East, has undergone a compromise due to pressure from international powers on other regional stakeholders. After the US has stopped its allies from trading with Iran in any field, new alliances are in the process of formation. *The Hindu* reported that Iranian ambassador Ali Chegani regretted India's decision to succumb to the US and

thought over linking the Terminal-1 of Chabahar Port with Gwadar Port.⁴ China has come up with filling the vacuum in time by offering billions of dollars investment in Iran. Pakistan would greatly benefit if Iran, China, and Pakistan came forward and connected Gwadar port and Chabahar port. Torfeh claimed that besides financial help granted to Iran, China had adopted a vast turn in getting maximum influence in the geopolitical scenario of the Middle East by shifting economic support to Iran, challenging the current global balance of power.⁵ Both Iran and Pakistan realize that India is not a reliable partner. Torangham stated that it had already voted against Iran in 2005, 2006, and 2009 at International Atomic Energy Agency, showing India's inability to manoeuvre US pressure in the region.⁶

Taliban Take Over: Prospects and Challenges for Pakistan

The twenty-year longest US war ended with a dramatic yet unprecedented takeover of the Afghan Taliban. The Neocons' ideology of the 'new American century' that started with President George W Bush came to a certain discredit US supremacy by ill-equipped religious militia, leaving profound repercussions for the US.⁷ US President Donald Trump initiated the exit strategy with help from allies while President Joe Biden unplugged the war. However, this might be an early assessment that whether the US failed or achieved its foreign policy goals in Afghanistan, it was evident that the peace deal would not have a logical end without Pakistan's efforts. Pakistan might not be a strategic partner, though it played a crucial role. It outweighed India's US-Afghan peace process imbroglio that Washington faced with its embarrassing exit. Scholars explain this phenomenon as Christina Fair states that "the US relies on Pakistan for logistics... and logistics will beat strategy every time." While India did not see itself central in this game, it spurred harsh criticism from the Indian policy circles and hawkish media. Therefore, much to the dismay of India, the strategic utility of Pakistan significantly increased in the US-Afghan Taliban negotiations. Rehman states that the US decision to avoid India in the Afghan peace process has harmed its security interests in the region.⁸ Both Pakistan and Afghanistan are not sailing smoothly on trade and economic fronts compared to India. The real motive behind India's crucial stance over its hold in Afghanistan aimed to access Central Asia to compete with Russia and China. India's position, therefore, is bleak, keeping international politics in view.

The Afghan peace process was a tedious and energy-driven process that often faced failures or getting closer to the deal. Pakistan's critical involvement, in this case, made it possible to bring the Afghan Taliban for negotiations which annoyed India for not being taken in this process. After the Modi government revoked Article 370 from the Indian constitution, India's unilateral decision has upset the peace and security of South Asia. In the Regional Security Complex theory, international dynamics affect regional stability. In consequence, Pakistan is facing a challenging situation on its eastern borders. India has further denied any call of mediation by the US. The lethal move to curb Kashmiris' right to self-determination in IIOJK has brought South Asia to the brink of an active conflict. Munir Akram mentions that India has made a dilemma out of the Kashmir dispute as great powers involved in Afghanistan by their proxy years.⁹

From Pakistan's perspective, it has to work more for regional integration, and CPEC is the way to assess the changing situation. CPEC is the key to enhancing trade ties with Russia, Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Iran. Iran has 158 billion barrels of oil reserves and 34 trillion cubic metres of natural gas, making it worth advantageous and connecting its links through Gwadar Port. If both Iran and China get interlinked in the absence of India, the possibilities are Pakistan would naturally benefit from regional connectivity. Geostrategic compulsions put Pakistan in a win-win situation where both states are vital for Pakistan. Pakistan's participation in the Middle Eastern security matrix may be fruitful if CPEC is manifested positively. It will help Pakistan constructive play in Southwest Asia.

Hegemony to Integration: CPEC to Counter India's Hegemony

Pakistan's geographical position has already strengthened with CPEC. With CPEC progressing full-swing through its phase-II, regional states consider it an opportunity to exploit the \$62 billion project with multiple benefits. China has already envisaged connecting to the Persian Gulf region, Africa, Europe, and Central Asia through BRI (CPEC). It is a prospect to restructure regions' economic and political array by promoting a network of trade routes, political cooperation, and cultural exchanges. The World Bank has also elaborated on the importance of CPEC for Pakistan in various perspectives from regional to global levels. It calls for the regional integration of CPEC and getting a consensus between civil and military leadership for expansion to these regions. It is possible through productive regional relations by using CPEC to liberate trade with neighbours.

As a gateway to the region, CPEC has offered an excellent opportunity for Pakistan to unlock this potential through exploiting measures. Easier said than done, the ever-changing dynamics of South Asia and the Gulf region affect such actions. CPEC is an opportunity for sustainable connections with regional states and regional dynamics; however, India presents a challenging scenario. Despite having a consensus among all regional states, there are challenges for materialising the vision into reality. These challenges are natural hindrances, such as at the SCO Summit held in Bishkek, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan endorsed BRI, whereas India publicly denied it.¹⁰ In the interplay of geopolitics, India, an ally of the US against China, follows a path of competition. However, CPEC has shifted the regional balance towards Pakistan. BRI visibly reflects the results in economic and political terms globally. Given its geographical position and multilateralism, Pakistan has moved to a much better strategic place than India, keeping its association with the US.¹¹

Strategically speaking, CPEC and Gwadar Port uniquely make the UAE nervous as it might be a new maritime logistical hub. The development of this port and CPEC has significant implications on the US interests and strategy in Southwest Asia.¹² It may not necessarily transit to any convergence with India on CPEC subversion. Pakistan can shift geopolitics through CPEC because the US and China are keenly interested in moving power alignments in the region for economic and security reasons. India has

always attempted to counter the influence of Pakistan in the area to maintain its hegemonic aspiration. The project of Chabahar Port, in this regard, grants India an uninterrupted yet lengthy passage to import Iranian oil. India initiated a considerable investment to import oil with an explicit exemption from the US. It perceives Chabahar Port as a competition against regional states. Singh stated that India's apprehension over Iran's openness to other regional states in the development of Chabahar Port would turn it into a conflicting zone and undermine India's commitment to seeing the port as an edge.¹³

Conclusion

The analysis offers insight into what options exist for Pakistan to connect with Southwest Asia despite several challenges. The stalemate between the US and Iran has turned the region towards a more conflicting situation. Given the Chabahar port's uncertain and slow progression, Pakistan is improving its relations with Iran. Pakistan's commitment to fast progress towards phase-II of CPEC would make it more reliable than India. Gwadar Port is the pivot of regional integration, and the connectivity would result in pragmatic decisions to expand CPEC that could drive positive developments in the complex regional security environment.

Despite dissent on ideological convergence, regional states can unite for regional trade and socio-economic development. Pakistan needs to warm up its ties with Iran while keeping friendly relations with Saudi Arabia. Pakistan can work realistically on CPEC and utilize Chabahar Port in its best interests, vital for economic life. The answer lies in regional integration. Pakistan needs to offer a massive breakthrough to the new Afghan government through CPEC to create a trade route to the Central Asian republics. The shortest route to the warm waters through Gwadar Port will multiply trading activities in Southwest Asia. Therefore, the Regional Security Complex theory offers insights to Pakistan to turn the regional competitive environment into a mutual dividend.

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CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION AND STATE SOVEREIGNTY

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Abstract

Climate change is a reality recognized globally. Although global efforts are accelerating, there are fears in the underdeveloped world regarding the erosion of their sovereignty through climate change action and response mechanisms. Remedial actions taken at various levels are not a compensating reflection of this reality. There is a need to establish a well-thought-out mechanism and support fast-track climate change action and responses. This study, therefore, highlights the impact of climate change action on state sovereignty through in-depth analysis by interviewing climate experts and officials. It reckons that the issue revolves around interference in internal policies through the prism of climate change action incorporating world organisations. It concludes that developing states may have fears regarding the overreach of developed states in their remedial actions, as seen in the Global South and Global North divide.

Keywords: Climate Change, State Sovereignty, Global South, Global North, IPCC.

Introduction

Climate change is adversely affecting the world at various levels. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports have given a red code alert in this regard. They fear that global surface temperatures may rise even under strict mitigation conditions. IPCC strongly believes that global temperatures will increase more than 1.5°C by the end of the century. Without any intervention, global temperatures will likely rise more than 2°C.¹ The international mean sea level will also surge somewhere between 0.26 and 0.82 metres by the end of the century, thus, threatening the territorial sovereignty of many island-states.² These climatic variations will not be observed symmetrically across all regions resulting in complex effects, including stressors and unfavourable outcomes.

Recent examples of fires, heatwaves, floods, and hurricanes across the globe are only a precursor to an impending storm. There is a dire need for collective efforts to mitigate climate change's adverse effects as it does not know state boundaries. Though the US, Europe, and China use coals and fossil fuels, nations of the Global South feel the worst climatic effects. It has now been acknowledged that the developed

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world (the US, Canada, Europe, China, Japan, Korea, etc.) has been responsible for such climatic effects over the years; yet, developing nations (mainly Asian and African) are facing the worst. It has given rise to climate discrimination (a sort of racism). According to the World Bank, 143 million people could leave their homes by 2050 due to climate-driven problems. Nations responsible for climate change are again at the forefront of suggesting and imposing rules and regulations, underlying the role of imperialism in climate change action. Addressing state issues in this regard is a complex phenomenon; this paper, therefore, analyses the situation and effects of climate change action on state sovereignty.

This study highlights the damaging climate change impacts on vulnerable states and global actors' role in mitigating those. It relies upon document analysis and open-ended interviews of climate change experts and officials working in the UN. It also focuses on developed states' climate change actions and abrasion of state sovereignty of vulnerable. It establishes that global climate change action does not conflict with state sovereignty; instead, a myopic view by a few states has further compounded the situation due to a lack of accurate scientific data.

State Sovereignty

The treaty of Westphalia, signed in 1648, is regarded as the beginning of the sovereign state concept. Various challenges to national sovereignty as a primary premise for organising global society have emerged throughout 350 years. Steinberger refers to it in the Encyclopaedia of Public International Law as “the most glittering and controversial notion in international law history, doctrine, and practice.”³ The concept of sovereignty is neither unambiguous nor indisputable; however, it elicits multiple disputes and, as a result, necessitates significant elaboration, including diverse approaches to the classification of sovereign nations themselves. Even the demise of the concept of a sovereign state is probable in a contemporary global environment; therefore, a relevant definition of state sovereignty is discussed to avoid historical underpinnings.

Internally, sovereignty refers to a state administration as the final authority inside its borders and jurisdiction.⁴ In international relations, sovereignty denotes independence, a right to perform state functions independently, excluding any other state. The sole right to exhibit a state's actions is territorial sovereignty.⁵ State sovereignty relies on its input and output legitimacy. The ability of a state to give its citizens a say in how to be governed is known as input legitimacy (e.g., vote and legal recourse). The capacity of a state to fulfil its inhabitants' demands for essential resources or prosperity (e.g., food, water, energy, employment, etc.) is known as output legitimacy.⁶

Globalization is the consequence of a complex mix of civilizational, political, social, economic, and other modern-day events.⁷ It leads to the transformation and contraction of the sovereign national authority.⁸ The concept and nature of

sovereignty are changing from what was initially thought for a nation-state, especially in globalization, strengthening of world bodies, and unipolarity of world order. With the advent of globalization, the spectrum of a state's internal affairs in which no one intervenes and is governed only by domestic laws and traditions is shrinking, while international law or law of a specific community (of collective involvement) is growing. In the modern world, sovereign rights have been reduced substantially. Several key authorities are promptly transferred from states to supranational organizations and institutions. Supranational, national, sub-national, and occasionally, regional and municipal units share sovereignty more often.⁹ Globalization is, however, important because climate change action (to be discussed in the subsequent paragraphs) requires global and collective efforts.

Climate Change Action

Climate change is one of the defining issues of the present era and must be addressed all at once by understanding the linkages between people, the environment, and the economy.¹⁰ A developed society responds to the issue of climate change by making worldwide treaties and national and sub-national strategies aimed at mitigating effects by lowering greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and increasing sinks (areas that absorb CO₂, such as forests and seas). Some are considering adaptation strategies to avoid, prepare for, or respond to possible adverse effects of climate change. While public organizations' activities may differ, they aim to eliminate public health and safety hazards.¹¹ The global community has vowed to fight climate change and meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

SDG-13 is related to climate action, which defines "stepped-up efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-induced impacts, including climate-related hazards in all countries, integrating climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning, and improving education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity concerning climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction, and early warning. It requires mobilizing \$100 billion annually to address the needs of developing states in moving towards a low-carbon economy."¹² World Bank suggests aligning with development, prioritizing key-systems transitions, and financing to support transitions for effective climate change action. There is a new paradigm of how strategists and policymakers solve climate change issues. The solution lies in turning from erstwhile GDP to Green growth. The national and global economy can continue expanding and dispel the warming earth's threat by rapid, market-led technological innovation and environmental action. Human Development Index (HDI) is more important than per capita income. The concept is 'Less is More.'

A substantial effort is needed with sincere output from all stakeholders to minimize climate change damages, as it is a marathon of emerging severe challenges for the entire world. IPCC was established in 1988 to mitigate climate change. Its formulation was a joint venture of the UN Environment Program and the World

Meteorological Organization. The first IPCC report managed to cast deep imprints on the world's relevant think tanks. It led them to formulate UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992 and its extending institution known as Kyoto Protocol. It was the first time the world showed interest in climate change impacts. The UN legal instruments, including UNFCCC, Kyoto Protocol, and Paris Agreement (a landmark agreement among 188 nations to check CO₂ emissions), had been actively involved in accessing climate change impacts and mitigation measures (Figure 1). Moreover, these gatherings with regional groups like G8 countries and civil society organizations galvanized to formulate and implement climate policies and actions against climate change vulnerabilities.

Figure-1: UN Institutional Arrangements for Climate Change



(Source: Authors' Compilation)

After issuing the 1990-IPCC report, UNFCCC was introduced to deal with climate change impacts globally. Later, it was forwarded to members for signatures during the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992;¹³ and enforced on March 21, 1994. The primary objective of this organization was to prevent humans from hazardous interferences to safeguard the earth from climate change impacts and to a steady concentration of GHGs in the air.¹⁴ Furthermore, UNFCCC remained focused on the contribution of developed states, urging them to counter the global threat and directing all parties to undertake precautionary and preventive measures to mitigate climate change impacts. It has also promoted sustainable development policy mechanisms to protect the environment in an era of industrialization.¹⁵

UNFCCC provides a platform for the states committed to adopting specific policy measures to mitigate climate change impacts to achieve its objectives. It offers guidelines to control GHGs emissions and improve climate literacy. It also gives direction for developing environment-friendly technology for all sectors (energy, transportation, agriculture, waste management, and forestry), encouraging eco-friendly sustainable development and water management of coastal areas. UNFCCC emphasizes formulating national policy infrastructure to minimize negative impacts of climate change on a state's national economy, environment, and health sectors. There is a consistent research and observation process about climate change, cooperation among nations to improve climate literacy at local, national, and regional levels, and the exchange of modern technologies to forecast and confront global climate change threats.¹⁶

The convention also advised developed states to reduce GHGs emissions and formulate policies to limit its emissions in the future, being the real contributor to the increasing concentration of GHGs in the atmosphere. Moreover, it emphasized

helping states by providing financial and technological assistance to compete against climate change threats.¹⁷ The convention introduced a Conference of Parties (COP) system to implement its mandate and progress achieved by the parties. COP-26 was held in November 2021, bringing parties together to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and UNFCCC. It is widely expressed that this is the time for action. With a change in administration, a more environmentally conscious regime, and Chinese Premier Xi Jinping pledges, the US has returned to climate change.

Kyoto Protocol primarily highlights the real contributor of GHGs emissions by claiming that the role of developed states is significant in this context. It also claims that these states are factually responsible for the growth of existing points of GHGs in the air. The Protocol considers these states as game-changer by arguing that their constructive steps could be helpful to cut GHGs emissions in the environment. Therefore, it motivates states for joint actions to mitigate the impacts of climate change because it is hard for an individual state to defeat climate change threats in isolation. A total of two commitments of the Kyoto Protocol have surfaced. One has completed its term from 2008 to 2012, whereas the second started in 2012. The first commitment sets GHG emissions goals for 37 developed nations and the European community (15 states).¹⁸

On December 12, 2015, Paris Agreement was made for “enhancing the implementation of policy mechanism of UNFCCC, its objective and aims to strengthen global response to counter climate change threats.”¹⁹ It is an arrangement that covers global issues mainly linked to climate change, including its mitigation measures for GHG emission, revision of climate-friendly approaches, and financial assistance. During COP-21, 196 state representatives participated and termed the best opportunity because “this agreement represents the best chance we have to save the one planet that we've got.”²⁰

During the 2019-General Assembly session, the primary exertion was to galvanize multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, and climate action. King Mswati III of Eswatini required the UN to transform words into actions. He stressed that ending poverty remains a serious challenge, but it has multiplied in the face of climate change and resulted in food insecurity as applicable to his nation. Therefore, he called for more investments by rich states contributing to carbon emissions to build stable societies and protection systems.²¹ Liberia’s President, George Weah, depicted the requirement of additional weightage to climate change and hinted at inadvertent advances of developed states, conflicting with state sovereignty of vulnerable states.²² Ghana’s President Nana Akufo-Addo highlighted that while rich resources of Africa are being exploited, African nations do not get their proportionate share, and the environment is left devastated. It acts as an impediment in reducing poverty and addressing the climate crisis.²³ Seychelles’ President Danny Faure explained that humanity could not simply ‘plunder indiscriminately’ under the guise of development for the sake of short-term profit. “Through exploitation, we are dooming

future generations to a planet beyond their ability to repair,” he warned, adding that “bringing law and good governance to the ocean is the only way we can ensure our collective survival.” Thus, hinting at the need of bringing climate action as per laws for the sovereignty of affected nations.²⁴

During the 2021-General Assembly session, the one common agenda at the forefront was climate action. The world community has had severe momentum in climate change action in the last three decades. However, the movement is still being affected by many factors like national interests, politics, financial constraints, change in commitment with change in government, and many more other factors. Climate change is not an issue for one state or organization; therefore, the action starts from the global community collectively at the state, organizational, unit, and even individual levels.

State Sovereignty and Climate Change Action

In the contemporary world, the impact of climate change on natural resources is crucial for our understanding of state sovereignty and the international order that depends on that sovereignty.²⁵ The damages of climate change, such as rising sea levels and extreme weather conditions, endanger the habitability of land and human rights, such as the right to self-determination.²⁶ Extraterritorial activities to achieve economic, social, cultural, and civil liberties threatened by climate change are dealt with by customary international law and international human rights law. The international law framework shapes a legal, political governance system based on state sovereignty to mediate the vertical connection between the state and its citizen.²⁷

Multilateral treaties, supply chains, and IT infrastructure exemplify a web of interconnectedness and reciprocity. The dangers and difficulties it faces are frequently just as complicated, with climate change being a malicious problem due to numerous uncertainties, diffuse consequences, and ever-changing hazards. At present, there are multiple well-documented risks to the current world order. A largely underexplored stressor is the impact of climate change on the supply of food and water and how these changes affect nation-states' sovereignty.²⁸ Climate change has severe implications for the internal dimensions of states.²⁹ Few nations feel that the aim and objectives of climate response go far beyond and are in contravention to their national ambitions. The Brazilian President's treatment of Amazon forests is a case in point. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, a former UN Secretary-General, dilates that time of complete and exclusive sovereignty has faded away; additionally, he remarked that theory never matches by reality on this aspect.³⁰ While quoting UN Environment Programme, Time magazine claims that most “G20 countries aren't following through on their promises.”³¹ States being subjects of international law are independent in decision-making within their territory as per their domestic laws.³² However, climate protocols are binding on nations and tangent with national aspirations.³³ These are interference in internal domains and, if followed, would ultimately be a sovereignty threat as it affects the economy, industry, and human resources.³⁴

The coal era is gradually ending under the Paris Agreement's climate protocols. Australia, for example, is the world's largest exporter of coal. If coal extraction is blocked, it may result in thousands of jobs cut among Australians. Coal royalties for Queensland have approached \$4 billion in 2019.³⁵ Mining policy can still decide elections in Australia, and the present government is determined to do the bare minimum on climate change.³⁶ In 2017, Prime Minister Scott Morrison held up a hunk of coal in parliament, declaring, 'don't be scared.' Resultantly, there have been protests declaring climate change a hoax.³⁷ At the same time, it is a death blow for the individuals connected with mining, transporting it to ports, and shipping it to major coal importers, China, India, Japan, and South Korea. Similar is the case in Poland, where limiting coal mining for climate concerns can reasonably affect elections results.

Brazil is home to the Amazon forests, which act as the world's lungs and absorb carbon dioxide³⁸ while providing livelihood to inhabitants. Timber business is a significant source of income, and areas cleared of forests are cultivated and brought under settlements.³⁹ Both conflict with each other; if Brazil goes for the world's greater good following climate protocols and policies, it adversely affects its local population.⁴⁰ There are protests against climate policies that become detrimental to national interests and considered interference in sovereign states' internal matters. Conversely, at the international level, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro is criticized for lacking action on Amazon forests and converting carbon sink to carbon sources in Amazon.⁴¹

The contemporary concept of state sovereignty comprises four elements, i.e., authority, territory, population, and recognition.⁴² By sovereignty, the state is entitled to the right to international personality (quality of a subject of international law), a status respected for territorial integrity, right to self-defence, and right to determine the political and social system to use it freely. Though debatable, it is universal that climate change exacerbates strains on state natural resources, presenting a substantial threat to state sovereignty and peaceful world order.⁴³ While acting on climate action, states' authority is curbed and confined. Regulations enforced and likely to be implemented through global climate action in the next few decades can reduce the status of state sovereignty in internal matters.

States are social edifices imperceptible in a natural realm, indivisible in state sovereignty.⁴⁴ A state is an obstinate and subjective reference point in an active earth structure. It brings an intrinsic challenging situation to the normative system upon which the authority lies.⁴⁵ In the case of climate change, it entails a solitary reorientation of neighbouring states' perceptions and an innovative, thoughtful understanding of the place of human social order as a wholly-owned subsidiary of the natural world. Therefore, the stage on which the concert of international relations occurs and the actor's role are changing wherein states feel threatened because of indirect actions to limit carbon emissions and effects of climate change.

According to the Montevideo Convention on Rights and Duties of States, a state must possess a defined territory for its inhabitants to occupy in the realm of human security.⁴⁶ Due to increasing sea levels resulting from climate change,

international law faces challenges in addressing the threatened sovereignty of island-states, such as Tuvalu, the Maldives, and Kiribati, as an intensifying human security concern.⁴⁷ The current state of international environmental law and human rights law has limited utility in protecting these human security issues and the territorial integrity of the states.⁴⁸ Artificial islands, land acquisition, and individual or collective resettlement need to be discussed in the UN as a possible option to address human security and respect state sovereignty.⁴⁹

Nations, complacent about global climate change, need to articulate climate geopolitics for understanding why climate challenge is enormous, complex, and vital to human survival – yet soluble only if all nations forgoing their independent interests pay attention to it now. Against the backdrop of climate scepticism, campaigns, national economic interests, and human security issues dominate perceptions of global vulnerabilities. Both realist and liberal elucidations of state behaviour and international cooperation prospects rely on state interest.⁵⁰ Nathaniel Rich's book titled "Losing Earth" and Gwynne Dyer's "Climate Wars" reveal nations dwelling on their national interests in contravention to global attractions as per the laid down regulations wake on empirical scientific data. Thus, it is not only the state but, more concurrently and importantly, human security, which is direly affected by the laws implemented in climate protocols. In the socio-political context, Fridays are protest days for climate action and demonstrations by have-nots as climate change threatens their livelihoods. The mill workers, oil drillers, carbon-emitting factory workers think that policies will harm them beyond any shadow of a doubt.⁵¹

The case of Pakistan, whose contribution to global emissions is negligible, ranks among the top ten countries vulnerable to climate change. Although Pakistan has taken several steps, such as the Ten Billion Tree Tsunami (TBTT) project, floating green bonds, Recharge Pakistan Programme, enhancing water conservation, reducing carbon emission, etc., these are insufficient to steer climate action. There is a growing need for participation of those states which are more prominent contributors to carbon footprints. Thinking beyond myopic solutions, climate action that too at the global level with regulations on all is the requirement if we want to save a better future for the next generations

The study's findings reveal that climate change is a reality. The sooner governments realize it at the state level through a collective binding mechanism and at the individual level by including climate literacy in policymaking, the better it would be. The COP participants agreed that climate change action is slow but not late yet. Therefore, the lethargy at the global level can attribute to many factors. Among which state sovereignty is the significant one. The developing states are still struggling to ensure their authority, whereas worldwide action against climate change requires commitment from the developed world. There is a convergence of interests for action against climate change; still, there is fear of greater involvement of developed world and international bodies in the affairs of the underdeveloped world.

Conclusions

The world is a global village, and the international community has a more magnified role owing to independent and readily accessible media. If climate issues are not addressed effectively, they can hurt and become their Achilles heel in this modern world. Though global leaders and developed nations try to control this danger through various international institutions, the international community also needs to be at the forefront and play its role. There is a need for a well-established mechanism for climate change action while ensuring the sovereignty of vulnerable states. Whatever solution is employed, it is critical to secure the meaningful involvement and empowerment of persons and communities impacted by climate change, particularly those already socioeconomically and politically linked within the international community. Inclusion and mutual consultation may pave the way for an effective mechanism for climate change action. We pose the greatest threat to our planet; we need to manage the unavoidable to avoid the unmanageable collectively.

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EMERGING US-JAPAN RELATIONS AND IMPACT ON EAST ASIAN SECURITY

*Arsh Shahid Khan and Aiysha Safdar**

Abstract

States with shared interests and values may form a collective identity to enact their vision and achieve security objectives against those they view as threats. Similarly, US-Japan relations have progressed for a long, not just due to the dangers posed by China and North Korea but because of their shared values of democracy, human rights, peace, and global prosperity. They share the vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific by forming bilateral and multilateral alliances. The US and Japan are also engaged in strategic partnerships for traditional and non-traditional security in the region, including maritime, cyber, space, and energy. This paper, therefore, focuses on East Asia due to its vulnerable security architecture and explores how the US and Japan's security cooperation strengthens regional security by sharing values and security concerns. It highlights that the potential of both states to form a collective identity may improve the security situation in East Asia.

Keywords: East Asia, Security, Collective Identity, Indo-Pacific, United States, Japan.

Introduction

The upsurge of maritime and territorial issues and the development of nuclear weapons in East Asia posed grave threats to regional security. It is accredited to the long-standing history of wars and resentment between various northeast Asian states, such as Japan and South Korea. In this regard, scholars and researchers have emphasised the importance of strengthening states relations through collective identities, like the US and Japan's joint interests in the region, including controlling or countering threats from China and North Korea. Forming a collective identity and common strategic practice is possible if states' convergence of interests and values exists in an interdependent bilateral or multilateral relationship. Thus, the US and Japan share a Free and Open Indo-Pacific vision and democratic values, such as freedom of politics, free economy, and protection and preservation of human rights. Both states practice unity against potential threats and develop multiple diplomatic, economic, and security projects within the region to forge a collective identity and stronger relations with other East Asian states. This paper, therefore, deals with the concept of collective identity and security while discussing US-Japan ties in East Asia. A simple qualitative research method is used to analyse the situation.

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Collective Identity and Security

The role of constructivism in a state's security challenges traditional concepts provided by realist scholars. It focuses on conceptual and non-traditional factors, such as the impact of norms on the international system and its security.¹ Another factor shaping national interests and threat perception is ideological similarities and differences.² Alexander Wendt, one of the pioneers of constructivist theory, holds identity in high regard concerning inter-subjectivity in international relations. Identities are formed due to external and internal factors influencing the understandings of the Self as opposed to the Other. Wendt also named four types of identity: person or corporate identity, type identity, role identity, and collective identity.³

Collective identity is considered a core variable in a state's security and foreign policy. It can be formed if states' interests and values are apparent in bilateral or multilateral relationships.⁴ It refers to positively identifying the welfare of another actor, whereby they are an extension of Self rather than as an opposing Other.⁵ Realists discuss that material forces, such as power and human nature, could form the basis of cooperation and collective action, whereas liberalists credit institutions and knowledge. Nonetheless, constructivism and its core concepts believe that collective identity is a prerequisite for all joint efforts among states.⁶ To form a collective identity among states, inter-subjective structures are essential, such as shared knowledge, understanding threat complexes, interdependence through trade, talks and capital flow, societal convergence of values, the existence of a common Other (an aggressor or a non-traditional threat), and symbolic interactions between what constitutes as Self and what they perceive as the Other.⁷

Collective Identity of the US and Japan

The US-Japan relations have seen some exciting developments in the 20th and 21st centuries. Despite being against each other during WW II, the US and Japan now have one of the most robust economic and military relationships, particularly in Asia.⁸ After the war, the US had militarily occupied Japan. The former began to transform the latter's politics and society to ensure it does not pose a threat in the future. Japan soon became a democracy after years of being under military rule, and the security treaty of 1952 created a foundational basis of their security relations once it became apparent that Japan was more of an industrial and military asset against communist influence in Asia. An alliance usually ends once a potential threat has been countered; however, the US-Japan relations continued to flourish and grow even after the Cold War. It happened due to sharing liberal, economic, and political identities and democratic values. Differences in their national security cultures even serve their security interdependence, and both states share complementary power sources.⁹ Since 2019, despite US President Donald Trump's criticism, Japan has asserted itself to take more leadership actions towards preserving the integrity of the alliance and stability of the international order.

Meanwhile, China remains a central focus of the US-Japan alliance, with similar views on containing its growing military and economic power. The US-Japan agreed approach is also inflicting maximum pressure on North Korea. China and North Korea are two states that constitute an Other to the Self (that the US and Japan see themselves). They are being considered a threat to US-Japan security and mutual interests.¹⁰ The collective interests of both Japan and the US include controlling and countering threats from China and North Korea to East Asia and global security.¹¹ Besides, maritime security is another priority area for the US-Japan alliance with President Trump adopting Abe's vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific region.¹² Both countries emphasise developing a network of partnerships and collaborations to uphold order in the region. The need for strategic cooperation on non-traditional matters, such as energy, digital economy, science, space, and technology within East Asia, has also been underlined. Cyber security is also taken into consideration under international law.¹³

Free and Open Indo-Pacific

The Indo-Pacific region is a collective geopolitical entity aiming to help the US and its regional allies expand and strengthen their networks, countering a perceived threat from China.¹⁴ Since the rise of China as one of the most significant global economic and military powers, the security of the Indo-Pacific region primarily revolves around China's socio-economic developments, foreign policy behaviour, and strategic actions. Even though China practices a free market economy, it implements protectionist measures to guard its economy, maritime routes, and sovereignty. However, the US and allies in the region consider China undermining their liberal values, open cooperation, free markets, and freedom of navigation. They conclude that geopolitical anxieties of the US, Japan, Australia, and India surrounding Chinese dominance have created this space.

The concept of Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) was introduced in 2016 by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to bring openness and freedom in the working relationship of Japan, Australia, India, and the US.¹⁵ In 2017, US President Donald Trump brought about a new and expanded version of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy, which entailed more military involvement and strategic investments.¹⁶ This version of FOIP primarily counters China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative (also known as Belt-Road Initiative – BRI).¹⁷ Even being an important regional security ally of the US, Japan has not completely disregarded China's BRI; Japan and China held summits to discuss how BRI could contribute to the region's prosperity. The vision of FOIP in both cases has a certain duality to it; both converge on common points. Despite seeming like a counter to China's efforts, they leave a space for the possibility of China cooperating and aligning with them. China and its foreign policy behaviour are crucial in determining the FOIP framework's conceptualization.¹⁸

East Asian Security

Today, the overall security architecture of East Asia faces several issues on both traditional and non-traditional fronts that could render it unstable and vulnerable to internal and external threats. These include but are not limited to armament on conventional and nuclear fronts, historically stemmed animosity (Japan-China, Japan-South Korea), territorial disputes, resource conflicts, and rivalries on power.¹⁹ The northeast Asian region lacks stable security architecture in contrast to Southeast Asia, where multilateralism flourishes as part of ASEAN. However, the consequences of an organized gap in Northeast Asia's security framework can spill over into Southeast Asia, particularly regarding economic security.²⁰

Although South Korea and Japan share resentment towards China and North Korea, their relations experience a considerable strain due to collective memories and previous war experiences. The territorial dispute over Liancourt Rocks (Dokdo and Takeshima Islands) and Comfort Women are prominent issues.²¹ Collective memory comes into play with China's strained relations with Japan due to Japan's refusal to acknowledge its war past and war crimes, such as the Nanjing Massacre in 1937 and quarrel over the sovereignty of Senkaku islands.²² Together, these political and territorial security concerns play a significant role in establishing a sense of shared identity and collective security. On the other hand, the ASEAN Way and the development of multilateral relations could be seen as an identity-building exercise. They pave the way to create a collective regional identity, whereby the ASEAN Way is considered the Asia-Pacific Way. Norms shared in the ASEAN Way build a solid collective identity. It lays out the region's collective strengths and weaknesses to build mutual trust and deepen relations with regular interaction.²³

Impact of US-Japan Relations on East Asian Security

The US and Japan, like their relationship, may be able to strengthen the security architecture of East Asia through the formation and strengthening of a collective identity among states both in Northeast and Southeast Asia. It is possible by creating common Others (China and North Korea) for all regional states and establishing multiple bilateral and multilateral relations based on shared interests, the convergence of values, and interactions. These interests and systemic processes do not have to pertain to traditional security measures; they can establish trade and capital flow and cultural and political values. This way, even if there are no potential physical threats, the security architecture would be more robust against any other traditional and non-traditional threats that could arise.

There are two principles to build trust between states in Northeast Asia, i.e., to balance interests with identity, something that is integral to East Asian cooperation, and to create the perception of an Asia of citizens over Asia of states. These can be applied to the economy, socio-cultural collaboration, and security. An example can be fostering travel between states and making investments to target the younger generation on a

socio-cultural basis to help end negative perceptions and enable the emergence of collective identity between them.²⁴ With Southeast Asian states showing a comparatively stronger regional solidarity, the US and Japan have increased their efforts to maintain stability and security, primarily through consultation and coordination with their partners within the region.

Pivot to Asia Policy

US President Barack Obama's Pivot to Asia policy redirected US diplomatic, military, economic, and cultural instruments towards Asia by strengthening alliances, increasing depth to partnerships, helping build a solid regional financial architecture, and empowering institutions within the region.²⁵ On the one hand, it attempted to curb China's rising dominance in the region and adopted a less accommodating stance towards China.²⁶ On the other hand, it was the first step towards building collective identity and a shared security network in the East Asian region. In 2011, keeping the US commitment to advancing broader regional strategy in view, President Obama introduced a new approach known as 'Rebalance' to preserve and enhance a stable and diversified security order in Asia-Pacific. In 2015, China began constructing an artificial island in the South China Sea called the Spratly Islands, an area claimed by the Philippines and Vietnam. In response, President Obama stressed forming the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), aiming to open further collaboration between the US, Japan, Philippines, and Vietnam.²⁷ Overall, the Pivot to Asia was a multi-dimensional strategy that significantly impacted the US relationship with Japan and other regional partners.²⁸

Defence Cooperation

In 2015, the revised guidelines for US-Japan defence cooperation recognized the threat brought by global terrorism, the proliferation of nuclear weapons (North Korea), a shift in global power balance (with China's rise), and the existence of grey zone situations.²⁹ In this regard, a coordination mechanism was introduced to expand cooperation on cyberspace, maritime, and outer space security. Both states pledged to work closely on regional and global levels.³⁰ The key aspects include Situations in Areas surrounding Japan (SIASJ), particularly regarding the Korean Peninsula issue and collective self-defence.

Washington and Tokyo also set regular meetings on different levels with regular interaction between US President and Japanese Prime Minister. The forum where primary decision-making occurs is the Security Consultative Committee (SCC), also known as 2+2, comprising Secretaries of Defence of both states.³¹ From 2005 to 2007, SCC meetings contributed significantly to help strengthen the alliance. The 2017-SCC meeting emphasised that US-Japan security cooperation should be increased with regional partners, such as South Korea, Australia, and Southeast Asian states, and advance bilateral and multilateral training and exercises. The most recent 2019-SCC meeting put cyber, electromagnetic, and space on the priority list for security, particularly within East Asian and Indo-Pacific regions.³²

Quadratic Security Dialogue

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe introduced a Quadratic Group (the US, India, Japan, and Australia) deciphered into a comprehensive security pact as a part of an Asian arc of democracy, freedom, and prosperity based on shared values.³³ It is an Asian version of NATO and a joint effort to contain China's rise within the region. The presumption behind creating this group was ideological as well as geographical. According to Prime Minister Abe, QUAD's vision spanned around states within the Chinese periphery, such as the Korean Peninsula and Southeast Asia. Former Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, marked it as cooperating with "like-minded countries in the Asia Pacific region with mutual interests."³⁴ QUAD's first meeting was held in May 2007, followed by military and naval exercises called 'Malabar' in September same year, with all four countries' navies and Singapore.³⁵

During the 2017-ASEAN Summit, the Quadratic Security Dialogue had a resurgence based on the growing convergence of four original members, particularly on the security in the Indo-Pacific region and creating joint countermeasures for terrorist activities. Issues discussed during the ASEAN Summit in Manila included the denuclearization issue of North Korea, propagating the vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, and having a rule-based system within the region.³⁶

Collective Identity among Regional Partners

The thickening of security cooperation between regional allies, particularly Australia, Japan, South Korea, India, Vietnam, Philippines, and Indonesia, is due to several possible explanations. It includes a shared threat perception against China and North Korea, decreased dependency on the US (out of fear of its abandonment and total control of its partners), and enhanced shared regional identity, norms, and interests.³⁷ However, the US-Japan security activities with Australia, India, and South Korea are shown in Table-1.

Table-1: US-Japan's Security Activities in the Region

Australia	India	South Korea
Economic and security relations ACSA (Japan)	Aligned interests (democracy, anti-terrorism, China as a threat)	Common threat perceptions on China and North Korea
"2+2" dialogues (Japan)	Malabar exercises (1992,2007, 2008, 2010, 2012)	GSOMIA (Japan)
Trilateral Security Dialogue (TSD)	RIMPAC exercises	US-Japan-South Korea trilateral relations
Maritime security + RIMPAC exercises:	Joint Declaration of Security Cooperation (2008 - Japan)	US bombers, Japanese ASDF, South Korean Airforce fighters
Navigational freedom	GSOMIA (Japan)	Non-combatant evacuation
Inclusivity	"2+2" dialogues (Japan)	Strike exercises (US-SK) and Ballistic Defense exercises (US-Japan)
Maritime capacity building in Southeast Asia	US-Japan-India trilateral strategic coordination	Joint Training and Multilateral Exercises: RIMPAC Cobra Gold
Counterterrorism	Promoting FOIP vision:	Defense Ministers dialogues
Disaster relief	Maritime capacity building with coastal countries	Exchange of Chief of Staffs (2015)
Non-proliferation of WMDs	Maritime security cooperation	
Tactical, logistical, and intelligence based interoperability		
Air-to-air + Air-to-ground combat Cope North Guam (2017)		

(Source: Author's Compilation)

Military capability is the key driver in strengthening the region's defense community. Even militarily weak states, such as Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam, cooperate with those having robust military capabilities in numerous ways. Sharing intelligence among states within the region and counterterrorism measures can pave the way for further cooperation. In Northeast Asia, despite their tense relations, Japan and South Korea's main incentive for developing defence and intelligence sharing ties is because of North Korea. Counter piracy and tackling illegal fishing, human smuggling, and drug trafficking problems have prompted deeper defence cooperative efforts among partners in Southeast Asia.³⁸ The US-Japan security activities with the ASEAN partners are shown in Table 2.

Table-2: US-Japan Security Activities with ASEAN

Vietnam	Philippines	Indonesia
Common threat perception of China	Mutual Defense Treaty (1951-US) - strategic partnership with Japan	Security relations (2000-Japan): Counterterrorism
Economic relations with both US and Japan	War on Terror coalition (post 9/11) - Developing military capabilities of AFP (US)	Reinforcement of democratic values
Maritime cooperation + military exercises (US)	Bilateral Strategic Talks (2011-US)	Prevention of weapons smuggling Non-proliferation and counter-piracy
RIMPAC exercises	Provision of Defense Sales: Training coast guard and Navy. Military, political, strategic consultations	Three coastal guard craft
Strategic partnership with Japan (security, diplomacy, and political dialogues)	EDCA to contain China and to allow the US a strategic footprint in Southeast Asia	Partners for New Challenges (2005 - Japan)
Extensive Strategic Partner for Peace (2014 - Japan)	Balikatan Exercises (2015) - Joined by Japan and Australia (2018)	Non-traditional security (disaster management) "2+2" dialogues (2015 - Japan)
JSDF bases in Cam Ranh Bay (2016)		
High-level exchanges between Prime Ministers and Defence Ministers (2017/2018 - Japan)	Bilateral Security Dialogue (2019 - US) Counter-terrorism and improving port and air security	Negotiations to transfer defence equipment and technology + joint multilateral exercises (2015)
Cooperation on defence technology and human resource training.	Japan-ASEAN Vision (2016)	998 security and defence activities (2011-2016 - US)
	Joint Statement (Bilateral talks and exercises with Japan) Intelligence sharing + counter-terrorism hardware (Japan)	US-Indonesia Strategic Partnership (2015): Maritime, defense, energy cooperation Economic growth Regional + global issues
	"2+2" dialogues (Japan)	
		Synergizing of IPO with Japan's FOIP (2018).

(Source: Author's Compilation)

In 2015, the alliance cooperation mechanism expanded cooperation areas, including maritime, cyber, and outer space within its security realms.³⁹ It reflects how collective identity and security in the 21st century need to cover expanding technological advancements.

Maritime and Cyber Security

Maritime law enforcement and cybersecurity are vital areas for expanded cooperation among regional states. Japan's efforts to transfer maritime law enforcement platforms, logistics, maintenance support, and training have been critical in developing security cooperation. Multinational naval and military exercises, such as the Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC), Cobra Gold (Indo-Pacific Military Exercise), and the Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) with ASEAN, have proven helpful in strengthening security cooperation and partnerships in the region. The US-Japan alliance and their partners could counter grey zone coercion tactics via promotion of information sharing, maritime domain awareness, persistent Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (P-ISR), and continued joint patrols and exercises, particularly in the East and the South China Sea.⁴⁰

Given the growing cybersecurity threats from North Korea, China, and even Russia, the US and Japan consider forming collective cybersecurity cooperation in a multilateral setting, involving Australia, South Korea, India, and other states in the Asia Pacific region. The US and Japan also work closely with the Philippines and Singapore to emphasise sharing best practices.⁴¹ Integrating national efforts with joint coordination ensures progress that can pave the way for broader allied cooperation;⁴² however, the variety of cultures, values, policies, and priorities presents a unique challenge.

Space Security

Multilateral cooperation with Japan, ASEAN, and Australia on space security is a promising area of cooperation;⁴³ therefore, the US had co-hosted two security workshops at ASEAN Regional Forum in 2014. The US-Japan Defence Guidelines (2015) also indicate space assets for early warning, navigation, communication, and positioning as essential areas of coordination. These assets, mainly ISR capabilities, can improve space systems' reliance and reliability for the US and Japan. Information sharing to detect and attribute threats in outer space can help improve situational awareness for the US and Japan.⁴⁴ Both states have also established the Space Cooperation Working Group and the Comprehensive Space Dialogue. The Asia Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum (APRSAF) is also an important platform to increase regional cooperation. Its current advantages are open, flexible, cooperative, and committed to tackling regional issues, aligning with the ASEAN Way.⁴⁵ Another joint initiative is SERVIR, established in 2004, a global network of regional partners dedicated to environmental management using satellite data and geospatial technology. Space security has taken an important

position in the US-Japan alliance. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue has also extended to the space security field, furthering the community building in the region.⁴⁶

Aside from multilateral and bilateral regional partnerships, the US and Japan work to advance the concept of Free and Open Indo-Pacific, mainly centred around regional energy security and digital economy. The Japan-US Strategic Energy Partnership (JUSEP), announced in November 2017, also promotes widened access to reliable and affordable energy in Indo-Pacific and Sub-Saharan Africa. The bilateral dialogues under this partnership are crucial to the vision of FOIP promoting peace, prosperity, and stability.⁴⁷ The Japan-US Strategic Digital Economy Partnership (JUSDEP) was initiated under the framework of the US-Japan Internet Economy Policy Cooperation Dialogue.⁴⁸ It aims to promote digital cooperation between the two states for regional security. Through this partnership, the US and Japan aim to provide and develop digital economic projects in other regional countries, such as Australia, New Zealand, and South Korea. The Japan-US Mekong Power Partnership (JUMPP), initiated in September 2019, allows the two countries to partner with the Lower Mekong states, such as Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, and Myanmar. It provides opportunities for more sustainable energy, regional power integration and trade, and quality infrastructure development under the G20 Summit's rules for Investment in Quality Infrastructure.⁴⁹

Challenges and Opportunities for the Region

One of the biggest challenges (and a major concern for US administration) is the uncertainty surrounding the US vision and commitment to the region. The 'America First' policy signified a dramatic shift in priorities for the US, where they testified to put their national interests before regional partners, including Japan. It has made the other states apprehensive about the US' possible abandonment due to shifting priorities.⁵⁰ The US administration would have convinced East Asian states that they are fully committed to working together to preserve regional security with mutual benefits in mind, not just catering to what the US expects and threatening to abandon them. The US should be mindful of its allies' interests and own individual cultures, norms, and identities.

Another challenge for the region would be the possibility of losing East Asian regionalism as the US, with the help of Japan, further establishes itself within the region. The US uses two methods, an indirect method involving Japan and supporting nations that share common democratic values, such as Australia, India, and even New Zealand (the formation of the East Asia Summit in 2005). The second method utilizes the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), overshadowing regionalism among East Asian states.⁵¹

The idea of Free and Open Indo-Pacific as both the leading actors, Japan and the US, cannot guarantee the security of East Asian states as better as China holds the potential to provide. It is a fact that China has already established itself as a regional and global power, and the idea of disregarding China's influence is off the table, especially

when East Asian states are politically, economically, or militarily dependent on China. East Asian states cannot completely break their economic ties with China; therefore, the US can balance China's growing influence. Moreover, the US does not share geographical proximity with the East Asian region. Thus, the entire responsibility lies with Japan to counter or initiate a military confrontation with China. The US-Japan relationship seems interesting since Japan faces constitutional limitations to using force and does not hold enough military capabilities to confront China's expanding military power. Such practical realities essentially undermine the credibility of the region's collective identity and collective security.

While the progression of US-Japan relations comes with challenges, they also hold a lot of opportunities for regional states. Building upon multilateral ties through a sense of collective identity, the US-Japan alliance can enable a substantial security architecture, especially for East Asian states. Partnerships, such as JUSEP, JUSDEP, and JUMPP, work towards improving energy security, cyber security, and the digital economy, particularly for the ASEAN states. They ensure the region's security on traditional means and non-traditional ones. Both conditions improve regional security on maritime, cyber, and outer space frontiers. Japan has proven to be a key ally in improving US relations with East Asian states; however, it has recognized the need for a certain degree of cooperation with China. While China's military capabilities are one of the prime threats to the region, there is still a possibility of cooptation between the US, Japan, and China.⁵² Japan's FOIP vision is the one that prompts more inclusivity and supports BRI for regional stability and prosperity.⁵³ It holds the possibility of cooperation with China without giving in to its increasing pressure or demands.⁵⁴ It may also keep some opportunity to increase collaboration between the US and China, where the former can view the latter as less of a threat.

Conclusion

The US-Japan relations are an example of how collective identity has made these two states from adversaries to one of the most important alliances in the region. The progression of this relationship in the post-Cold War era, with changed Japanese identity and increased dependency on the US, has paved the way for collective security efforts, traditionally and non-traditionally. With the perceived threats from China and North Korea as 'Other,' the US-Japan alliance has become of utmost importance for the region. They help strengthen regional states by building strategic partnerships and providing assistance, including military, maritime, cyber, space, energy, and digital economy. Building a solid and stable East Asian security architecture secures the region significantly. The FOIP vision is another point of convergence that promotes openness, inclusivity, peace, and prosperity. All those states that share these values can strengthen collective identity and maintain collective security. The US and Japan have proven that partnerships and alliances can progress and strengthen regardless of a potential threat. Their emerging relations can improve and increase regional security cooperation and form a collective identity strengthening East Asian security architecture through shared values and interests.

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UN FEMALE PEACEKEEPERS: AN ANALYSIS IN TERMS OF THEIR SERVICES

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Abstract

UN peacekeepers serve under harsh and dangerous conditions to help and support the most vulnerable people in conflict zones. The UN recognizes the importance of gender responses in peacekeeping engagements. It has expanded the role and contribution of women in peacekeeping and considers their role critical to enhancing overall peace and security. This paper, therefore, aims to study the cost-benefit analysis of the UN peacekeepers in terms of their services. The study is based on qualitative research using Pakistani female peacekeepers as a case study to draw analysis based on informal conversation/interviews with the former female peacekeepers, officers, and trainers. It also examines the current UN peacekeeping training module. This paper argues that the cost and benefits of the peacekeepers should be in line with the services required and concluded that focusing on peacekeeping operations is impractical without proper training and facilitation.

Keywords: Gender, Peacekeeping, Engagement, Training, Female Peacekeepers.

Introduction

The history of peacekeeping forces goes back to the foundation of the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO). It was formed in May 1948 when the UN Security Council (UNSC) authorized UN military observers to monitor the Armistice Agreement between Israel and Arab states. Since then, more than one million men and women have served the UN peacekeeping mission. Around 100,000 military, police, and civilian personnel have been currently deployed in 14 peacekeeping operations from 125 countries, including female peacekeepers.¹ Despite their immense capabilities, women's role in stabilizing and rebuilding societies is often being marginalised. Generally, war is associated with men and their masculine power, but the heat of war is felt by women too. The proponents of feminist discourse determine that war and peace are gendered activities.² They highlight that women's experiences, responses, needs, and approaches are different in both war and peace.³ Feminist scholars argue that national and international security agencies and policymakers often ignore women's roles as an agency in peacebuilding.⁴ There is a need to incorporate women's roles as peacebuilders⁵ in security discourses. Although UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

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recognized women's peacebuilding role in its 2004-assessment, women in conflict zones still have little recognition as a resource and re-constructors of society.⁶

When it comes to promoting peace in conflict zones, UN peacekeeping efforts gain prominence.⁷ UN peacekeeping operations revolve around humanitarian aid, military and police support, and civilian rehabilitation. According to chapter 7 of the UN Charter, their main goal is to rehabilitate, reintegrate, and reinforce society. Broadly, all UN peacekeepers follow the principle of consent to maintain the impartiality of peacekeeping forces and zero use of force until their self-defence is threatened. The roles of UN peacekeepers include military observers (without guns) who monitor the ground security environment, formulate mechanisms to control the security breach, and ensure a way forward. They opt for a political and civilian engagement at the national level and advocate with all leading departments. Their larger goal is to ensure that society will manage its affairs smoothly without external assistance once UN forces move out of the mission zone.

Today, the demand for UN peacekeepers is growing with increasing instability and insecurity at the global level. According to UN 2018-statistics, in terms of troops contribution, the top ten peacekeeping countries (ranking-wise) are given in Table 1. It indicates that the number of female peacekeepers is less than male peacekeepers, raising concerns about gender roles and their importance in peacekeeping operations.

Table-1: Top Ten Troop Contributors (2018 and 2021)

Country	Male	Female	Total in 2018	In 2021
Ethiopia	7,750	588	8,338	6,052
Bangladesh	6,869	154	7,023	5,905
Rwanda	6,506	309	6,815	5,210
India	6,657	55	6,712	5,124
Pakistan	6,192	26	6,218	4,441
Nepal	5,293	197	5,490	4,985
Indonesia	2,616	83	2,699	2,457
China	-	-	-	2,390
Egypt	3,186	1	3,187	2,164
United Republic of Tanzania	2,468	178	2,646	-
Ghana	2,323	322	2,645	1,851

(Source: statista.com)

The gender aspect of security is crucial to development. It was only due to the promulgation of UNSC Resolution-1325 on Women, Peace, and Security that women's inclusion in the security debate became a necessity.⁸ The role of gender in peace and conflict has now become a critical aspect of security studies.⁹ Women's rights and understanding women's issues to transform core political and economic uplift have also become important in security-related policymaking.¹⁰ The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) emphasises the inclusion of female peacekeepers in UN missions. It also oversees the deployment of the female-formed police unit. Gender equality has been the main driving force behind international peace and security.¹¹

UN report on Resolution-1325 demonstrates that women constitute only one percent of military personnel at senior levels compared to 5 percent civilian police personnel and 12 percent of senior civilian staff serving in peacekeeping operations. These numbers suggest women are seriously under-represented in senior-level positions. However, the UN report also indicates that in the year 2000, women's role as gender advisors in peacekeeping missions increased from 2 to 10 percent. With this, they cannot effectively leverage bureaucratic positions. The subsequent studies undertaken by the UN to enhance the security of vulnerable populations in conflict-prone regions call for more representation of women in planning and execution tiers for various missions' deployment across the globe. The strategic focus of the UN Secretary-General on important areas highlighted during the UNSC meeting on April 11, 2019, calls for enhancing women peacekeepers representation, i.e., from 15 to 35 percent.¹²

Women's role as peacebuilders in conflict and post-conflict contexts is gradually growing, mainly because of evidence-based advocacy. Research shows that gender equality plays a significant role in conflict prevention and that women's involvement in peacebuilding has increased the probability that violence will end by 24 percent. According to an estimate, two billion people live in conflict-affected countries, and women play key roles in sustaining peace. UNSC Resolution-1325 detailing risks women face and their determination to tackle conflicts has gained importance in the gender debate. Potentially that is the core reason behind female peacekeeper inclusion in the UN peace missions. South Asian women have been actively engaged in peacebuilding, but their contributions have not been examined to date. For instance, in 2018, International Alert published a list of seven women peacebuilders without mentioning South Asia's women peacebuilders. Therefore, this research focuses on Pakistani female peacebuilders to understand how they contribute against all odds in the local context.

To reflect on the South Asian region, home to various conflicts, women are direct victims and perpetrators.¹³ Martinez argues that women's role in Nepal directly demonstrates their potential to secure themselves, eventually leading to an internally stuck phenomenon. Martinez further argues that Nepalese women help or support men in agriculture and generate taxes for Maoist-controlled guerrilla zones.¹⁴ Therefore, the social impact of conflicts is more oblivious in South Asia, where women head households and widows are further pushed under the heavy responsibility of maintaining their family welfare.¹⁵ In these societies, women, particularly widows, are culturally regarded with prejudices, and an alone woman invites predatory behaviour, which is common. There are very few internationally supported reconstructions programmes that seriously consider women's role. Though the UN commitment and its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) highlight the actual situation of women in post-conflict regions, the non-inclusion of women in security discourse is a huge gap that can be bridged merely by including women.

UN Peacekeeping History

The UN plays the role of guarantor for international peace and security in conflict zones. During the Cold War era, to deal with protracted and volatile conflicts with more complex war requirements, DPKO was established. Herewith, a shift from traditional inter-state conflict to protracted intra-state conflict emerged. The US-USSR Cold War rivalry led to many regional competitions. At that time, the UN's role in international security remained restricted to contain war only. The end of the Cold War brought along a lot to several protracted conflicts; some of them were escalated, such as killings in Cambodia, ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the collapse of Somalia, genocide in Rwanda and Burundi, etc. Thus, set security, peace, and development challenges for the international community and the UN to deal with them. According to article 1 of the UN Charter, to maintain international peace and security, effective collective measures are required to prevent and remove threats by peaceful means in conformity with the principles of justice and international law.¹⁶

Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary-General, pointed out that the Cold War and bloc politics (as a consequence) made it extremely difficult and impossible for the UN to implement its Charter, especially in the area of peace and security.¹⁷ The historical timeline of UN peacekeeping came into existence when UNSC became paralyzed during cold war rivalries. Its initial requirement was to resolve conflict through peaceful means and provide support and stabilize the ground situation. The first two missions were UNTSO and UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP). UN Emergency Force (UNEF) is the first armed peacekeeping force deployed in 1956 to address the Suez Crisis. In 1960, UN Operation in Congo (ONUC) was launched as the first large-scale UN peacekeeping operation having nearly 20,000 military personnel. Around 250 UN peacekeepers died in this mission while bringing peace and stability to Congo. In 1960 and 1970, short-term missions were deployed in the Dominican Republic, West New Guinea, and Yemen, while long-term deployment was in Cyprus and the Middle East.¹⁸

The post-Cold War era led the UN from traditional security to armed peacekeeping operations and missions.¹⁹ Most of the tasks were toothless. Although the military remained at the heart of peacekeeping operations, administrators, economists, police officers, legal experts, human rights observers, humanitarian workers, etc., play their due role in the mission areas. From 1984 to 1994, there was a rapid increase in UN peacekeeping operations.²⁰ With that, the number of peacekeepers also increased from 11,000 to 75,000. The famous deployments were in Angola (UNAVEM), Cambodia (UNTAC), El Salvador (ONUSAL), Mozambique (ONUMOZ, and Namibia (UNTAG).²¹ These deployments were made to implement a complex peace agreement, stabilize the security environment, reorganise their military and police departments, install new governments and build democratic systems in the conflict zones.

The 21st century came along with its challenges for UN peacekeepers. The UN peacekeeping missions faced severe crises in the mid-1990s, such as a lack of resources

and robust mandate.²² In Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Somalia, the UN troops were tested when guns were not down; hence, they could not keep peace in these mission areas. At that time, the UN had to reassess its measures to avoid such failures in the future. They had to come across more complex missions in Kosovo, East Timor, Burundi, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Syria, Haiti, Timor-Leste, etc. Currently, more than 110,000 military, police, and civilian staff are deployed in 14 countries at various UN peacekeeping missions to achieve the larger goal of the UN peacekeeping operations. It includes facilitating the political process in mission areas, protecting civilians, helping/supporting in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former combatants, assisting in the organization elections, protecting human rights, and helping in restoring the rule of law.²³ The UN aims to place police peacekeepers to maintain law and order in the mission zones.²⁴ The UN emphasises policing rather than the military to protect civilians and incorporates a multidimensional approach that includes humanitarian aid considering social conditions and various factors.

Pakistan's Peacekeeping Contributions

Pakistan has been contributing to UN peacekeeping missions since 1948 to date. According to official statistics, Pakistan has contributed more than 200,000 troops in 28 countries on almost all continents. The diversity of peacekeepers in various geographical, cultural, political, and security conditions is the commitment.²⁵ Pakistan has been one of the most significant troop contributors for many years. Pakistan's troops deliver their level best in various peacekeeping operations for sustainable peace, such as confidence-building measures, power-sharing arrangements, electoral support, strengthening the rule of law, economic and social development, or protecting civilians in war-ravaged lands. The men and women of the Pakistan Army have risen above all expectations and served humanity.

Pakistan participated in UN Stabilization Mission in Congo (MONUSCO). It has contributed over fifty thousand troops.²⁶ According to the Pakistan Peacekeeping Department (PPD), Pakistan participated in 46 UN peacekeeping missions in around 28 countries. Currently, nine contingents are performing their duties in 14 UN missions across the globe. Recently, the largest contingent has deployed in DR Congo. Pakistan has deployed troops in infantry battalions, aviation units, engineer companies, level-II hospitals, and field supervision, including military and police. The equipment footprint is helicopters, military vehicles, and medics. Around 158 Pakistani peacekeepers have sacrificed their lives for maintaining global peace. Pakistan is equally taking the responsibility of pre-mission arrangements, including mandatory peacekeeping courses, such as the UN Contingent Commander course, UN Military Observer course, UN Staff Officers course, UN Protection of Civilian course, UN Police Officers Training course, UN Gender Advisor course, UN Female Engagement course, etc.²⁷ Pakistan has actively contributed to 17 UN manuals on peacekeeping.

Pakistan provides UN integrated training platforms, such as the Centre for International Peace and Security (CIPS), where participants undergo multidimensional activities as per training modules based on UN peacekeeping mission, UN legal framework, Human Rights Law, and Humanitarian Law. The training modules pay special attention to respect for diversity as the UN peacekeepers come from diverse backgrounds and land in different environments. They learn to deal with foreign media, unfamiliar cultures, strange environmental issues, and health and stress management. Gender, Peace, and Security are discussed at length to understand the importance of the roles of female peacekeepers in the mission areas, especially in dealing with sexual violence and exploitation on the ground. The peacekeepers' conduct and discipline regarding their accountability to human rights violations remain.

Pakistan Female Peacekeepers' Engagements

Several studies undertaken by the UN to enhance the security of vulnerable populations in conflict-prone regions call for more representation of women in the planning and execution tiers. While improving female peacekeepers' representation in the operations, the focus remains on recruitment and training of potential peacekeepers, global communication and outreach, leadership and accountability at all levels, and creating enabling environment for gender parity. Female peacekeepers have added importance to keeping pace with the emerging deployment requirements in line with the resolve reflected at all tiers. Female Engagement Team (FET) is another dimension wherein female peacekeepers are trained and deployed to access areas and parts of the population, usually closed off to men. That affords them the presence among communities, which can help provide insight into core areas and offer opportunities to address gender-specific and women empowerment-related issues. The prime objective identified for the female peacekeepers when interacting with the vulnerable masses is to act as a focal person on the issues concerning women and children while contributing towards Trust and Confidence Building Measures (TCBM) in the mission areas. They frequently interact with volunteer populations, including women and children, for identification, registering, and seeking to minimize their needs.

Besides, female peacekeepers interact and establish liaisons with UN agencies and organizations working on women, gender, human rights, child protection, UNICEF, etc. The larger aim behind their engagement is to remain abreast with the evolving risks, render assistance in related activities, and offer services in the Quick Impact Project in the contingent area of responsibility. They map human terrain, compile data on gender-specific volunteer segments, communicate to command to meet the challenges, and identify volunteers in conflict zones for immediate redressers. They form part of investigative processes; they plan, coordinate and conduct outreach activities by visits and interaction to update situational data on refugees, IDPs, and up-rooted or isolated vulnerable families.

For a successful outcome of tasks assigned to FETs, Pakistani female peacekeepers are trained to understand the functioning of the UN, its legal framework,

nature of the mission, human rights, gender advisory, etc. Pakistan emphasizes broadening its female peacekeepers' professional understanding (working to eliminate threats to the vulnerable populations) by sharpening their skills and techniques to handle the diversified tasks. UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) helps develop a better understanding of UN civil-military coordination (CIMIC) activities. UN female representative focuses on the subject related to Women, Peace, and Security. Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) are possible employment fields where female peacekeepers interact with conflict-affected communities and coordinate different aspects with various stakeholders.

Pakistan has deployed more than 400 female peacekeepers to date, who have performed exceptionally well in UN mission areas; their services have worldwide acknowledgment. These lady officers have been a source of motivation for the female gender in conflict-ridden regions across Africa. Their interaction and services as community advisors are always praiseworthy, earning a good name individually and for the entire Pakistani nation. Tables 2 and 3 illustrate the data of Pakistani female peacekeepers.

Table-2: Female Deployment – UN

UN Mission	Deployed with UN Contingents	Military Observers	Staff Officers	Total
MONUSCO	102	21	29	152
MINUSCA	114	17	14	145
UNAMID	42	10	12	64
UNMISS	-	7	13	20
UNFICYP	-	5	10	15
MINURSO	-	7	6	13
Total	258	67	84	409

(Source: CIPS)

Table-3: Current Female Deployment – UN

Serial	UN Mission	Deployed with UN Contingents	Military Observers	Staff Officers	Total
1	MONUSCO	32	-	9	41
2	MINUSCA	16	-	4	20
3	UNAMID	11	-	3	14
4	UNMISS	-	-	5	5
5	UNFICYP	-	-	2	2
6	MINURSO	-	2	-	2
	Total	59	2	23	84

(Source: CIPS)

Challenges for Female Peacekeepers

Incentive-wise, UN female peacekeepers have no extraordinary benefits; just getting double salary is inconsequential in the peacekeeping missions at the cost of services required. There is no incentive for promotion, whereas the UN requires maximum female engagement in the operations. Female peacekeepers come from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds with varied social contours. Although they represent their country and meet the UN requirements, living and operating in a protected environment is simultaneously a privilege and a risk. The price paid for their services in the mission zone needs to be improved and incentivized.

The UN female peacekeepers perform office work regarding staff duties and female interventions to a certain extent. They work along and engage with the civilian arrangements and bring success to the mission. Female peacekeepers can easily handle the sensitisation of vulnerable society, whereas male peacekeepers handle hardcore interventions. But when the UN demands robust structures, they need to propose a logical proportion from male to female peacekeepers. Since the UN requires more female peacekeepers, they need to pay as much as they deserve. They should be compensated adequately. They incur far more costs in being away from parents, husbands, children, friends and living in a hostile environment. UN peacekeeping domain has regular donors funding; therefore, peacekeeping missions should not rely on resources but efficiency, rapid deployment capability, and a superior technical advantage over the spoilers.

Conclusion

The UN should reflect on its existing policies and mandate regarding peacekeeping training and its on-ground process within the current security environment. Hybrid operations have contiguous political and financial advantages; hence the UN can reflect on its existing operations and incorporate e-hybrid functions in the required regions. They cannot apply the same mandate forever. Besides, the UN peacekeeping resolve needs to be revisited based on the asymmetric threats. This paper concludes that the cost-benefit analysis of the UN female peacekeepers is an unfair business that needs special attention. The services provided by female peacekeepers and their compensation portray a dismal picture compared to their sacrifices. Therefore, if the UN wants to encourage more female participation in peacekeeping operations, they should be incentivised significantly.

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- ¹ Note: All UN Peacekeeping related facts and figures are taken from the Official UN Peacekeeping Department Website. The Pakistan's Peacekeeping Training modules related information is collected from CIPS, NUST. All Government related data is collected from the Army and Government and Pakistan Official websites. The following websites are frequently used for accessing data: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/pakistan> <https://www.pakistanarmy.gov.pk/> <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/un-peacekeeping-70-years-of-service-sacrifice>.
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BOOK REVIEWS

SAPIENS: A BRIEF HISTORY OF HUMANKIND

*Review by: Sara Aleem**

ISBN: 9780062316097

Author: Yuval Noah Harari

Sometimes, nonfictional literature captures readers' attention to the extent where turning a blind eye is impossible. It all depends upon the author's native skills and literary observations shaping into words to become a manuscript like "Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind." This work is predominantly based on evidence from biology, paleontology, anthropology, and economics, crossing the chronological order of over 2.5 million years of genus Homo to unfolding the achievements and dominance of Homosapiens. It begins by examining the first human inhabitants to walk on earth to the radical discoveries of the Cognitive, the Agriculture, and the Scientific Revolutions serving in the evolution of Homosapiens throughout history. These revolutions generate extensive human history and various discussions by interpreting early human migration, cultural and socio-economic adaptation to environmental challenges, and technological breakthroughs.

The author starts discussing the Cognitive Revolution, 70,000 years ago, taken as a monumental phase of the supremacy of Homosapiens, as it renewed the sapiens brain and gave them an edge to spread out from East Africa to the whole of planet earth. The ability to share, gather around the myth, communication, reasoning, and build upon information is a distinguishing feature that helped sapiens cooperate and thrive. The discovery and domestication of fire played a crucial role after language in humans' evolutionary past. The usage of fire allowed the sapiens to expand, inhabit, or colonize the distant colder realms. However, the author did not mention how the Cognitive process developed about the socio-cultural environment. The development of modern humans' cognitive skills requires literacy, schooling, complex urban life, vast cultural experiences, and advanced technologies.

According to the book, Homosapiens, around 12000 years ago, underwent an agricultural revolution that profoundly impacted the way humans functioned in the ecosystem. Humans began to influence their surrounding environments by domesticating animals and plants. However, the author believes that the agricultural

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revolution is 'history's biggest fraud.' Primitive hunter-gatherers tend to know the natural surroundings more, thus, living a happy life as nomadic wanderers. The agricultural revolution is thought-provoking but unconvincing to many as it is synonymous with creating a choice when there is none. The agricultural revolution surrounded humans with infectious diseases and endless labour exploitation. The author overlooks the reality that agrarian societies specialized in numerous tasks that led to the development of written languages, innovations, and cherished art. It is not as if humans can go back in time and start to live again as hunter-gatherers.

The author notes that humans' greatest strength differentiating them from all other living beings is convincingly conjuring up stories related to fantasies. History centres upon tales; some are for understanding, and others prompt to cooperate in achieving common goals. The scientific revolution transformed the world of humans from a primitive hunter-gatherer society to a technologically-advanced modern world. Previously, humans were inclined towards religious scriptures to hunt for knowledge about the world. The science helped combine empirical observations about the world with various mathematical tools that brought clarity to the human minds towards their understanding of the world. It can be inferred from the recent development in science (NASA) seeking religion's help in dealing with extra-terrestrials.

The author delineates that modern scientific advances are about gaining insights and knowledge on scientific advancements. Humans have become obsessed with science and trying to achieve progress through it, which is worrisome. He discusses that mainly government (imperialism) and big corporations pay for scientific research. They only fund those researches that help them make more money or yield more power than those beneficial to humankind. European imperialism and the scientific revolution supported the capitalist society to live in today. The author showed his deep scepticism about new technological advances in medicine, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and bio-engineering.

This book has received worldwide acclamation for a unique insight into history. The concept of human evolution described in the book contradicts many religious scholars but is considered scientific. The split of lineage into two and the development of the new species of Homo is somewhat contradictory to religion because followers of all divine faiths believe that God created Adam and Eve and gave birth to the human race. This book also received criticism for its assertion regarding human rights, which the author considered a myth and further compared them with the US Declaration biologically. However, this work is a unique concept about the human evolutionary process. The book eagers to encompass almost the entire human past, from evolution to capitalism and modern genetic-bio engineering, to explain why sapiens are the way they are. Humans sooner or later, if they become immortal, as per the author, could no longer describe themselves as *Homo sapiens*. Today's humans may become irrelevant in the future; they will become a new species altogether.

CREATION OF BANGLADESH: MYTHS EXPLODED

*Review by: Asfand Yar Khan**

ISBN: 9789692316903

Author: Dr. Junaid Ahmed

The 1971-War has been a tragic incident in Pakistan’s history. The separation of East Pakistan was not a result of abrupt developments, especially in the late 1960s. It had been coming since the inception of Pakistan in 1947. The book titled “Creation of Bangladesh: Myths Exploded” reveals historical facts that caused the upheaval in 1971. It covers the conspiracies, misadventures, and failures while discussing the overstated narratives and their proliferation through hostile powers to tarnish Pakistan’s image. The book exposes misunderstandings in history and unveils the truths about the formation of Bangladesh.

In the opening, the author discusses the narratives critical to Pakistan’s armed forces concerning the massacre in East Pakistan and a complete amnesty to *MuktiBahini* and Indian troops. It also enlists some fabricated myths and breaks them with facts and figures, such as socio-political issues, propaganda against Pakistan armed forces, Indian intrusion, killings, rapes, and Prisoners of War (PoWs).

The author highlights troubling events, including the ethnic divide, leading to bitterness in East Pakistan. It took plenty of sacrifices for Muslims of the subcontinent to carve out their homeland (1947). Despite the inspiring struggle, ethnic polarization started soon after independence, when language became a political issue, whereas human and natural bases further alienated east and west wings. Consequently, five factors like language issues, the damaging role of political parties, colonial-era-inspired bureaucracy, discriminatory part of private investors, and economic deprivation and exploitation widened the gap.

India has been hostile towards Pakistan since its inception. In 1947, slogans of regional reunification emerged within the Indian leadership. The philosophy of *Akhand Bharath* (united India) did not allow Hindu nationalists to accept the 1947-partition; they considered it a temporary event. India’s military and political offices never left any opportunity to damage Pakistan. The book quotes various speeches of Prime Minister

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Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi. It also describes specific facts about Indian Congress and right-wing extremist organizations like the Hindu Mahasabha and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Furthermore, the author discusses the political rivalry between Z. A. Bhutto (Pakistan People's Party) and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Awami League) in the backdrop of the 1970-General Elections.

This book uncovers *MuktiBahini*, including its organizational structure, objectives, and tactics to achieve its goals. It shows the nexus between India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and the Bengali insurgents. Over the years, the Indian lobby and hostile powers have portrayed Pakistan as an oppressor and *MuktiBahini* as a local revolutionary militia. Agartala Conspiracy case also unveiled the contacts between Awami League and Indian Intelligence. After establishing RAW in 1968, Indian leadership authorized it to raise a militant outfit in border areas of East Pakistan and India to exploit the internal vulnerabilities of Pakistan. The Indian Border Security Force (BSF) provided essential sabotage training to the militants (terrorists in the contemporary environment).

The last section opines that Bangladesh confronted economic and political disturbances soon after separating from West Pakistan. Despite promising a better future, the Awami League exposed its dictatorial and authoritative intentions. Scores of non-Bengalis were brutally killed or starved to death. The Golden Bengal promised by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman did not glitter. Bangladeshis are yet to see the prosperity pledged at the time of separation. The bilateral relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh did not normalize even after four decades. Mistrust and suspicion have kept the two countries from enabling a cooperative relationship. Pakistan and Bangladesh possess enormous strategic and economic potential. As the author suggests, both states must take confidence-building steps to establish strong ties based on mutual understanding and trust in the future. Pragmatically, there are no permanent adversaries or friends, but only interests. There are examples of past skirmishes entering bilateral agreements and multilateral cooperation for mutual gain in world history. Bangladeshi intellectuals are often sceptical of India's superiority complex over them. Pakistan can capitalize on this opportunity to counter Indian hegemonic designs in the region.

HOW THEY RULE THE WORLD: THE 22 SECRET STRATEGIES OF GLOBAL POWERS

*Review by: Madina Ali Zamani**

ISBN: 9781529102864

Author: Pedro Banos

The skillful employment of geo-economy and geostrategy instruments as state-power translates into a geopolitical standing of a state to act and exert its influence. The book titled “How They Rule the World: The 22 Secret Strategies of Global Powers” expresses the same while pondering upon 25-year experience and research of the author in geopolitics, intelligence, defense, and international relations domains. The argument presented in the book gulfs into various facets of the nature of the world, the geopolitical power play, and the game of influence. The author has contextualized each strategy that influences the world, in classical and modern history – from Bismarck to Kissinger and present-day political leaders Trump, Putin, and Xi Jinping.

According to the author, the international arena is characterized by the game of influence where ambition, rivalry, and violence triumph, rendering it a geopolitical context. The powerful state employs all the means to weaken, subjugate, and control the weak; thus, the vicious cycle of violence prevails as powerful states impose their will. The second part of the book entails a detailed account of geopolitical values that shape the international political environment in which states interact. The contemporary geopolitical environment shadows four principles, the state is a living organism, money shapes geopolitics, the weight of history, and there are no permanent allies, only permanent interests. The author attempts to stress the pervasiveness of Realpolitik in all domains of geopolitics like economics and diplomacy.

The book introduces 22-strategies the great powers use to pursue their ultimate ends. These strategies range from most straightforward to the subtlest. Some are drifting away from the traditional notion of world dominance while others conform to the strict rules of power politics, such as deterrence, encirclement, deception, wearying

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the enemy, exploitation, divide and rule, indirect warfare, lawfare, psychological operations, disinformation, weaponization of religion, soft power, and public manipulation. The author identifies an elusive geopolitical aim behind every strategic move made to influence the world. Whether it is humanitarian intervention, religious freedom, or under the guise of democracy, there have always been ulterior geopolitical and geo-economic interests at play. States might be generous in rhetoric, but principally power politics predominates.

Post-truth has been ruling global politics, where Haves manipulate the dominant discourse, impacting choices made by the Have-nots. The pervasiveness of post-truth politics has swayed the discourse of knowledge, information, power, democracy, economy, law, religion, and geopolitics. While ideas like freedom of speech and human rights are part of public speeches, the game of influence is on under the guise of purported liberal norms. Nonetheless, among the dominated, those who do not conform to the status quo and attempt to challenge it through dissent are often silenced or delegitimized.

The book emphasizes the failure to learn from past mistakes that have led to chaos and conflict, elucidating the understanding of human weaknesses. The great powers' lust for more power often causes irreparable damage, where the public is the ultimate victim. While employing secret strategies, the scrutiny of culture, traditions, and value systems must be comprehended; because what worked once might not necessarily work in other circumstances. Therefore, these strategies need to be customized, flexible enough to meet the requirements of modern time, and yet proactive to cope with future challenges.

The author unveils the tactics and tools of socio-politico-economic hegemony exerted through the higher echelons of power. In a nutshell, the book is very dense in content since numerous examples from the past and contemporary era have been incorporated to substantiate the argument. The author has divulged the manipulation of 'ways, means and ends' by great powers' quest for global hegemony and dominance. He has established how powerful few attempts to influence the weak and vulnerable, employing strategies with the military as a last resort. The economic factor, however, emphasises its preeminence in geopolitical decision-making. As per the author, financial considerations are essentially the driver that prompts states to either go for war or pursue peace.

To conclude, the author did not investigate the overwhelming role of emerging cutting-edge technologies, lethal autonomous weapons, overarching Artificial Intelligence (AI), spatial weaponisation, and exploitation by great powers to pursue their geopolitical objectives. AI has revolutionized warfare, thereby posing grave challenges to the associated command and control structures. As an evolving field, the prospects of AI, however, are yet to be explored.

HIGHER THAN KARAKORAM: SEVEN DECADES OF PAKISTAN-CHINA PARTNERSHIP

*Review by: Talha Malik**

ISBN: 9789698772093

Editor: Dr. Talat Shabbir

Pakistan and China have been trusted partners since 1950 despite diverse beliefs, cultures, and social systems. Pakistan was the first Muslim state that recognised China at the UN. The Pak-China friendship has witnessed several strategic, diplomatic, and economic pacts, strengthening their relationship. Earlier, the nature of the relationship was attentive to diplomacy and military; however, both states started promoting economic relations that led to the free trade agreement and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). They share the history of internal instability instigated by nefarious non-state actors, which provides both nations an insight into each other's problems incited by internal and external elements. Historically, China has never wanted India to establish its hegemony in the region. Therefore, the resilient nature of both states in the face of adversities and shared interests makes them natural allies.

The book “Higher than Karakoram: Seven Decades of Pakistan-China Partnership” is a compilation of Pakistani and Chinese authors' viewpoints, which have contributed to countering the growing challenges and understanding the relationship for future generations. It's a unique tribute to Pak-China Friendship, marking the 70th anniversary of the Pak-China relationship. The authors have provided valuable insights into the Pak-China relationship's past, present, and future in multiple dimensions. It helps the reader to understand the different scopes and depth of bilateral relations of Pakistan and China.

The book provides a detailed description of historical events that have shaped the current dynamics of the relationship. Both countries face hegemonic designs in the region created by a staunch rival and neighbour, i.e., India. Its hegemonic behaviour poses a severe threat to regions' peace and tranquillity by creating a strategic imbalance.

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For regional stability, China and Pakistan share a vision of One Belt One Road, which connects the region, thus bringing peace and prosperity. This struggle of regional hegemony has initiated a power struggle between the states to contain one another. However, through CPEC, China has led the region to become potentially stable, vibrant, and prosperous by creating trade opportunities and captivating international players.

The book highlights that since the outbreak of COVID-19 has posed severe challenges to the world, such as rising inflation, unemployment, and poverty, it has also provided opportunities to China and South Asian nations in medicine, vaccine development, economic recovery, and improvement in public health capacity. However, the future development of China-South Asia relations may face challenges. The complicated inter-state relations and fragile security environment would significantly impact the cooperation between China and South Asia, including connectivity projects. The bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and China under CPEC provides directions for further development, whereas the fourth industrial revolution, driven by AI, has taken the world by storm. Therefore, integrating technology and the economy has become the strategy for prosperity. Pakistan and China have agreements to fill technology gaps through trade programs, increased efficiency, and research activities.

Due to its strategic location, Pakistan has tremendous economic growth potential, witnessing an upward trend. The agriculture and service industry dominates the economy, while industrialisation is relatively low. CPEC has provided an essential foundation to Pakistan's economy to overcome this issue, emphasizing industrial development, including energy, transportation, and infrastructure. There are myriad opportunities for future cooperation in technology and economy, such as agriculture technology, marine science, earth science, information and communication technology. Lastly, tourism and culture are the main drivers of economic growth. The prospect of tourism needs attention, as it can promote cultural exchange between the two friendly states.

The book also counts on Covid-19 and its socio-economic impacts on people's lives around the globe. The lack of attention from world health institutions has further deepened the public health crisis. Meanwhile, the role of China has been resilient in dealing with the pandemic and managed to supply medical teams, vaccines, and equipment. However, Health Silk Road is a broad idea aiming to promote health awareness and safety consciousness in developing states with weak health systems. In a nutshell, this book gives insight into the relationship between Pakistan and China. It covers a wide range of regional factors, such as the hegemonic behaviour of a neighbouring state, the unstable situation of Afghanistan and under-stress Iran, and their impacts on the relations of Pakistan and China.