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FAULTLINES - THE SERIES

FAULTLINES focuses on various sources and aspects of existing and emerging conflict in the Indian subcontinent. Terrorism and low-intensity wars, communal, caste and other sectarian strife, political violence, organised crime, policing, the criminal justice system and human rights constitute the central focus of the Journal.

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PUBLISHER & EDITOR
Dr. Ajai Sahni

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Dr. Sanchita Bhattacharya

EDITORIAL CONSULTANTS
Prof. George Jacob
Vijendra Singh Jafa
Chandan Mitra

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Foreword

In every age, we have been reminded of the inherent and extreme contradictions of war. The stresses of armed conflict appear to bring out the best and the worst in mankind, at once provoking unimaginable barbarities as well as a creative genius that has spurred human knowledge, science and technology into the realms of greatness; destroying the very foundations of morality and social order, even as they inspire fundamental transformations in values and establish new worlds of hope; stirring in the human mind unequalled rapacity and inconceivable self-sacrifice, moral collapse and spiritual exaltation.

And when war coalesces with religion – as it invariably does throughout history – such contradictions are infinitely compounded. All the great Faiths emphasise restraint, abnegation and an inflexible morality above all concerns of profit, victory and even survival. Yet all institutionalized Faiths have allied themselves to stark power and pelf, and some of the greatest atrocities of history – wars of aggression, rapine, genocide, slavery, some of the vilest and most oppressive forms of discrimination and oppression – each has been, at some time, validated by high religious authority. A vast chasm has been created by ambition and avarice, between the principles and the practice of religion.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ, for instance, the very foundation of Christianity, preaches a radical pacifism. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ declares, “Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.” And yet, it is in the name of Christ that the crusades were
launched and sustained over nearly four centuries. And where Christ declared, “Let him who is without sin cast the first stone”, the Catholic church inflicted the torments of the great Inquisition.

The Hindus speak of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, ‘the world is one family’, but constructed the gross inequities of a vicious caste system.

Islam, the Faithful remind us repeatedly, is a religion of peace. And yet, today, violence and discord afflict almost every Muslim majority state, and strife flows from these to impact much of the world.

How could Buddhism be an exception? Despite occasionally startling examples of commitment to the core tenet of Ahimsa or non-violence against all living beings – perhaps embodied in the life of the present (14th) Dalai Lama, Lhamo Thondup – Buddhist communities and states have not been averse to war and violence.

And what brings violence to an end? India’s Northeast has been a locus of chronic ethnic violence virtually since the moment of the birth of the nation. A proliferation of insurgencies have since afflicted much of the region but appear, now, to have substantially burnt themselves out. While kinetic measures have been integral to the state’s counter-insurgency responses in the Northeast, a wide variety of non-kinetic strategies have also been deployed. Prominent among these have been a diverse range of peace initiatives, some of which have successfully ended specific insurgencies, others that have limited or ended certain patterns of violent action, and still others that have produced enduring, albeit uncertain and fragile cessations of hostilities, and a restoration of democratic processes and governance.

Separately, the state and its agencies may itself be the source and cause of insurgent and terrorist violence, even as the shadowy core of its power centre – the deep state – actively undermines and ‘manages’ democratic processes. This has certainly been the case in Pakistan, where the military-madrasa-mullah nexus has come to dominate the national imagination and democratic processes,
though election after election has demonstrated the absence of democratic support to this corrosive power cabal. Pakistan’s history is a cautionary tale for others in the region and across the world on how identity politics and militarism are an incendiary mix, and not a force that can help cement nationhood.

But identity politics and a new legitimation of authoritarian and communal politics is now a growing reality in India, and will provide fertile ground for hostile states to exploit in new patterns of disruption. The wars of the future are ‘hybrid’, exploiting a range of instrumentalities well below the threshold of open war, to inflict harm on the target state. India is already victim to corrosive proxy wars and patterns of long-term subversion, and the scope for injury is vastly augmented by the revolutionary technological transformations of the past years, by globalization and the integration of the communications and information technology spectrum, and a progressive erosion of the distinctions between the military and non-military spheres. All measures suggest that India’s leaderships are yet to imagine the sheer magnitude of this challenge, and a policy response remains well beyond the reach or aspirations of the powers that be.

The *madrasa* has long been a favourite whipping boy in the discourse on radicalization, extremism and terrorism, on the one hand, while conservative Muslims insist that the institution provides much-needed educational and welfare services, particularly in societies where state systems fail to fulfil basic obligations. Such a failure is acute with regard to the female population in Pakistan, where state and public institutions have systematically reinforced the disempowerment of women, and where female education receives particularly low priority within and dismal wider educational scenario. Empirical assessments of the role and efficacy of *madrasas* are rare, and an evaluation of the efficacy (or otherwise) of *madrasas* in promoting female empowerment in Pakistan is of particular significance.
This volume explores these diverse themes in a continuing effort to bring into critical focus elements of the complex dynamic that produces, sustains, confronts and, on occasion, neutralizes divergent patterns of conflict.

Ajai Sahni
October 28, 2019
One of the fundamental tenets of Buddhism is *ahimsa*, or non-violence. Yet the history of Buddhism is replete with violence, committed not just by followers defending their country or faith, but also for personal and political gains. While many Tibetan Buddhists violently (and in vain) opposed the Chinese after the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) “liberated” their country in 1950, Chinese and Japanese Buddhists have often supported and justified extreme acts of violence down the ages, including during World War II. And recently, there’s been a rising spate of violence by Buddhists, including monks in Myanmar, Thailand and Sri Lanka, who believe that their religion is under threat. So what explains this massive gap between perception and reality?

The Buddha was a wealthy Indian prince named Siddhartha Gautama who lived around the 6th century BC. But struck by the fact that life appeared to be an endless cycle of sorrow, suffering and death, he became an ascetic in search of the meaning of existence. After years of wandering around in search of an answer, he achieved Nirvana (enlightenment)

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*The author is a Foreign and Strategic Affairs analyst.*
after meditating for 49 days under a Bodhi tree, and became the Buddha, or the enlightened or awakened one.

His teachings soon spread across India into China and Asia and eventually around the world. Today there are an estimated 380 million practitioners of his faith, which essentially preaches deep contemplation and compassion for all living things.

But the faith mutated along the way, and today the three main denominations of Buddhism are Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana, each with several sub-sects. The Tibetan sect falls under Vajrayana, while the numerous Mahayana sects include Zen, Pure Land, Nicheran, Sokka Gokai, and the Falun Gong, which rattled the Communist regime in China. Theravada, practiced in South and Southeast Asia in countries like Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand, lays stress on the monastic aspect of the religion, although monks have joined political dispensations in places like Myanmar and Sri Lanka. Mahayana, which means ‘large vehicle’, is practiced in North, East and Southeast Asia in countries like China, Korea, Vietnam and Japan, and stresses on Bodhicitta or the awakened heart.

The Vajrayana or diamond (indestructible) vehicle comes from the syncretism between Buddhism and the Hindu Tantric Yoga, and it has many complicated practices and systems of Bodhisattvas, Buddhas and Deities. Tibet, Nepal and Japan are some countries where Vajrayana is practiced.

The faith also morphed “to include a pantheon of deities in addition to Gautama Buddha. Those include numerous bodhisattvas, the term for sage-like individuals who work for the enlightenment of all sentient beings. In Theravada Buddhism, practiced mainly in Southeast Asia, Gautama Buddha is only the most recent of 28 Buddhas described in
holy texts. And then there are *avatars*, humans believed to be incarnations of deities.”¹

While some Buddhist texts do sanction taking human lives in exceptional cases to protect the *sangha* or defend the innocent, most (*but not all*) Theravada and Mahayana Buddhists today reject even these justifications.²

**“IF YOU MEET THE BUDDHA ON THE ROAD, KILL HIM”**

That was the intriguing title of a book by American psychotherapist and author Sheldon Kopp, first printed in 1972.³ Subtitled “the pilgrimage of psychotherapy patients,” the book comprises a number of short stories which dwell on the ‘pilgrimage’ aspect of psychotherapy, and expounds on Kopp’s belief that it’s the journey of life that matters, not the destination. But apart from obliquely hinting that one needed to believe in oneself and not blindly follow a Buddha, or anyone else who claimed to have all the answers, the book doesn’t quite explain why the Buddha, a symbol of non-violence, or *ahimsa*, needs to be killed.

Kopp’s title may have been startling, but it was not original. He was echoing Línjì Yìxuán, a Buddhist monk who founded the Linji school of Zen Buddhism in late 9ᵗʰ century China. According to Linji, “Followers of the Way [of Zen], if you want to get the kind of understanding that accords with the Dharma, never be misled by others. Whether you’re facing inward or facing outward, whatever you meet up with, just kill it! If you

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meet a buddha, kill the buddha. If you meet a patriarch, kill the patriarch. If you meet an arhat, (someone who has, or is about to achieve Enlightenment,) kill the arhat. If you meet your parents, kill your parents. If you meet your kinfolk, kill your kinfolk. Then for the first time you will gain emancipation, will not be entangled with things, will pass freely anywhere you wish to go...”

Of course, Linji was not literally promoting mass murder, parricide or the killing of whoever one came across in their lives, but stressing, perhaps a bit dramatically, that true salvation lay in understanding that anything, even the Buddha, was an attachment that one needed to get rid of in order to achieve true salvation.

However, the words “kill” and “Buddha” in the same sentence are difficult to reconcile for most people for whom Buddhism tops the list of all the ‘peaceful’, ‘non-violent’ religions in the world.

“The impression of Buddhist pacifism is so strong that it has suggested to historians that it was a significant factor in the downfall of Buddhism in India,” argues Stephen Jenkins, Professor of Religion at Humboldt State University, whose research is focused on Buddhist ethics, “Buddhist kings would seem to be implicated in a hopeless moral conflict. No Kṛṣṇa seems to rescue the Buddhist Arjuna from the disempowering moral conflict that arises between a warrior’s duty and the values of ahimsā (nonviolence).”

6 Ibid.
Perhaps nothing embodies this non-violent image more than the forever smiling Lhamo Thondup, or Tenzin Gyatso, better known as the 14th Dalai Lama, the spiritual head of the Tibetan Buddhists.

This is the same Dalai Lama who blessed Indian Army Colonel Sonam Wangchuk a day before he led his unit of Ladakh Scouts to take on Pakistani intruders in Kargil in late May 1999. Three days later, battling extreme weather and geographical conditions, Wangchuk’s 40-man unit attacked and killed or evicted some 135 Pakistani soldiers who had occupied Chorbat La, a strategic pass 5,141m (16,866 ft) high in the Himalayas.

Colonel Wangchuk was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra, India’s second highest military decoration, for his bravery. Recalling that the meeting with the Dalai Lama before the mission was mooted by a senior JCO, Wanchuk recalled in an interview that his faith helped him tremendously: “We were given prasad and sacred threads by him (the Dalai Lama). When you are alone on the battle front far from loved ones it is only divine presence that encourages you to go ahead and do your best.”

So here we have a Buddhist warrior who has no trouble reconciling his faith with his job, or as he describes it, his duty, despite it entailing violence and killing. He’s not the only one.

**THE SECRET WAR IN SHANGRI LA, OR THE SHADOW CIRCUS**

In 1998, the BBC released a documentary titled *The Shadow Circus: The CIA in Tibet*, which shattered the popular

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impression that the non-violent Tibetans allowed the People’s Liberation Army to stroll into Lhasa in 1951 after half-hearted, token resistance.

Produced by Tenzing Sonam, (whose father Lhamo Tsering was a resistance leader) and his wife Ritu Sarin, the film uses rare footage to vividly recount how a few thousand Tibetans took on the mighty PLA for almost two decades. Outgunned and outnumbered, they fought a violent and bloody guerrilla battle on the roof of the world. And their unlikely, and in the end, unreliable ally for much of the time was the American Central Intelligence Agency.

The 50-minute documentary cites retired CIA veterans and surviving Tibetan fighters to shed light on how Washington funded and trained the resistance until it suddenly decided that wooing Communist China made better sense.

According to intelligence documents declassified by the US State Department in August 1998, the CIA budgeted almost USD1.7 million a year through most of the 1960s for the Tibetan resistance. Code named ST Circus, the top-secret operation included covert training at a site in the remote Colorado mountains (where Tenzing’s father went for training) and later in Mustang, Nepal. It also involved supplies for reconnaissance teams in Tibet and an annual subsidy of USD180,000 for the Dalai Lama, who fled Tibet after an unsuccessful uprising and took refuge in India in 1959. And the ‘Tibetan cause’ was promoted through “Tibet Houses” set up in New York and Geneva.9

According to one memo among the declassified US documents, “The purpose of the program… is to keep

the political concept of an autonomous Tibet alive within Tibet and among foreign nations, principally India, and to build a capability for resistance against possible political developments inside Communist China,” then under the iron rule of Chairman Mao Zedong.

Warren W. Smith Jr., a research historian at Radio Free Asia and author of several books on China’s control policies in Tibet, asserts that Indian intelligence officials also set up a secret Tibetan unit within the Indian Army, though declassified US documents indicate that Tibetan leaders occasionally complained to Washington about India’s half-hearted support.

In Shadow Circus, Acho, an operative who was part of the CIA sponsored outfit conducting raids into Tibet from Mustang, vividly recounts one of the more “successful” raids, where 40 Tibetan horsemen ambushed a Chinese military convoy on the Xinjiang-Lhasa highway in 1961: “The driver was shot in the eye, his brains splattered behind him and the truck came to a stop. The engine was still running. Then all of us fired at it. There was one woman, a very high-ranking officer, with a blue sack full of documents.” These documents later proved to be treasure trove for US intelligence operatives desperate for information on Mao’s China. But the graphic rendering of the violence speaks for itself.

In his 1990 autobiography Freedom in Exile, the Dalai Lama admits that two of his four elder brothers (Thubten J. Norbu, who passed away in the US in September 2008, and Gyalo Thondup, 91, who runs an ancient noodle making

10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
factory in the Indian hill town of Kalimpong), made contact with the CIA during a trip to India in 1956.\textsuperscript{14}

According to the Dalai Lama, the CIA’s decision to help was “not because they cared about Tibetan independence, but as part of their worldwide efforts to destabilize all Communist governments... Naturally, my brothers judged it wise to keep this information from me. They knew what my reaction would have been.”\textsuperscript{15}

China, however, insists that the Dalai Lama knew of the operations right from the start, and accuses him of being a “splittist” agent of foreign forces seeking to violently separate Tibet from China.

Lamenting the CIA decision to train and equip Tibetan guerrillas who conducted raids into Tibet from Mustang, the Dalai Lama argues that this “only resulted in more suffering for the people of Tibet. Worse, these activities gave the Chinese government the opportunity to blame the efforts of those seeking to regain Tibetan independence on the activities of foreign powers – whereas, of course, it was an entirely Tibetan initiative.”\textsuperscript{16}

Notice, however, that he does not say that those seeking to regain Tibetan independence should do so without violence.

Richard Nixon, who was elected President of the United States in November 1968, decided to open up to China. But one of Beijing’s pre-conditions for any formal talks was that all help to Tibetans had to stop. In 1971, a year before Nixon and Chairman


\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
Mao Zedong held their historic meeting in Beijing, the CIA abruptly wound up its Tibetan operations. And in 1974, Nepal bowed to Chinese pressure and sent its army to close the camps in Mustang. When the Dalai Lama heard that the few remaining rebels there were refusing to surrender, he sent a taped message urging them to do so. Unable to handle the conflict between the instructions of their spiritual head and the need to defend their faith, many of the US trained rebels jumped into a raging river and drowned. One senior officer slit his throat after handing over his weapons, while another was ambushed and shot by the Nepalese army. Tenzing argues, “These were men who had been fighting the Chinese since the mid-Fifties, people who had grown up with guns and knives, being asked to surrender their weapons … It was the end of everything for them.”

The two instances mentioned above – Colonel Wangchuk and the Tibetan resistance – show that when it comes to defending their nation, Buddhists have no qualms about resorting to violence or going to war. The same logic applies when it comes to defending their faith.

The cover of Buddhist Warfare, a series of essays edited by Michael K. Jerryson and Mark Juergensmeyer, has a disquieting photograph of a youngster in maroon Buddhist robes and shaved head standing on the bank of the mighty Irrawady – brandishing a revolver. The essays not only document violence down the ages by Buddhists of all hues – and there are many – but also expose the deep symbiotic relationship between the Buddhist clergy and several states which co-opt religion to justify violence for political ends. This link between Buddhism and aggressive political and military action are clearly visible

17 Patrick French, op. cit.
in the large number of people who died in the wars between Burma and Thailand, and in Cambodia.

And then of course there is the extreme brutality of Japanese soldiers during their conquest of China, particularly in Nanking in December 1937:

The Japanese invaders took full control of the city on December 13. In seven short weeks, they engaged in “an orgy of cruelty seldom if ever matched in world history.” They brutally murdered, raped, and tortured as many as 350,000 Chinese civilians. In this bloodbath, more people died than at Hiroshima and Nagasaki combined. For months, the city was filled with piles of rotting corpses. Nearly 80,000 women were raped and mutilated, many gang-raped. Soldiers disembowelled women. Fathers were forced to rape their daughters, sons their mothers. All manner of inhuman torture was practiced without remorse. Children and the elderly were not spared. Thousands of young men were beheaded, burned alive, or used for bayonet practice.19

In his introduction to Buddhist Warfare, Jerryson says that while “The motivations for this volume are many, but chief among them is the goal of disrupting the social imaginary that holds Buddhist traditions to be exclusively pacifistic and exotic.”20 He then goes on to note:

The Indian Kālacakratantra describes an eschatological war in which the army of the bodhisattva king of Shambhala conquers and annihilates Muslim forces and re-establishes Buddhism.21

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20 Michael K. Jerryson and Mark Juergensmeyer, op. cit, p.3.
And in Japan, Zen became a mechanism of the state and a motive to fight – to convert the heathens. Japanese Buddhist military objectives in the early 1900s were to kill unbelievers and to convert their state to Buddhism. In accordance with Mahāyāna principles, people who were not enlightened would be reborn; therefore, there was no true destruction of life. Once the state became Buddhist, unbelievers would be reborn in a Buddhist country. Brian Victoria writes that, in this context of Buddhist war, murder becomes a form of upāya (skillful means), since sentient beings are ultimately saved. When Buddhist states have attempted to preserve Buddhist principles and values, popular forms of Buddhist nationalism and fundamentalism have been simultaneously elicited.²²

In his subsequent essay, Jerryson brings out the link between violence and the role of monks as a political symbol in Buddhist countries, and suggests that attacks – real or perceived – on monks could be one of sparks, triggering violent acts of Buddhist retaliation.

Any “view of an authentic early Buddhism” that rejected violence “flies in the face of reality” since “Buddhism has always been closely associated with rulers” and was “an instrument of power,” asserts Bernard Faure, Kao Professor of Japanese Religion at Columbia University, in another essay.²³

The role of Chinese Buddhists who enthusiastically endorsed and supported the Korean War effort to ingratiate

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themselves with the Communist state is brought out by Xue Yu, author of *Buddhism, War and Nationalism*. In this case, “patriotism served almost as a new religion.”

Among the other essayists in *Buddhist Warfare*, Brian Daizen (Andre) Victoria, professor of Japanese studies at Antioch University and the director of the Antioch Education Abroad Buddhist Studies in Japan, is the only one who asserts that the “soldier-Zen” in Imperial Japan “so grievously violated Buddhism’s fundamental tenets that the school was no longer an authentic expression of the Buddhadharma”. According to him, the clear alignment of Buddhists with state interests was so clearly evident in Imperial Japan, and proved that the “sangha has become corrupt and degenerate,” adopting a “slavish subservience” and “becoming the *de facto* pimp and prostitute of the state.”

In his 1999 dissertation, *Zen and Japanese Militarism: A Critical Inquiry into the Roots of “Imperial Way-Zen*, Victoria dwells on “the way in which institutional Buddhism became ever more tightly interwoven with, and supportive of, the government’s ongoing expansionist policies on the Asian continent, especially in Korea and northern China,” and “the increasing role played by leaders of both the Rinzai and Soto Zen sects within institutional Buddhism in justifying the identification of Buddhist doctrine and practice with a martial spirit and warfare.” Further, “What becomes clear is

26 Ibid, p. 128.
the manner in which these ostensibly religious efforts were in reality merely one aspect of the Japanese government’s attempt to win the allegiance and acquiescence to its rule of its colonial subjects...”

The irony of images of Avalokiteshvara, the Buddhist embodiment of compassion, adorning Japanese Kamikaze aircraft during World War II, or the Pure Land Buddhist monks arguing that the war was necessary to preserve ‘true’ Buddhism, is hard to miss.

More than 4,000 kilometres southeast of Japan lies Myanmar, a predominantly Buddhist nation in the news today for its brutal suppression of Rohingya Muslims. Earlier known as Burma, Myanmar is the northernmost country of Southeast Asia. Flanked by China in the north, Laos and Thailand in the east and southeast, Bangladesh and India in the west and northwest and the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal to the south and southwest, it is the 26th most populous country in the world, and the 40th largest country by area, with a 2019 estimated population of 54.34 million.

Almost 90 per cent of this population practices Theravada Buddhism, which adheres closely to the oldest Buddhists texts and stresses on a rigorous observance of the monastic code. Christians comprise 6.2 per cent of the population, Muslims 4.3 per cent, Animists 0.8 per cent and Hindus 0.5 per cent. The Muslims are primarily concentrated in the Rakhine state on the Bay of Bengal, with the port city of Sittwe as its capital.

Buddhism has been the state religion of Burma beginning with the Kingdom of Bagan in the 11th century, and the Faith has been used to consolidate the national identity since then.


28 Ibid.
Subsequently, most Burmese kings and rulers supported the Buddhist Sangha – or the monastic order – which in turn gave the ruling dispensation some legitimacy. While encouraging nationalism, the Sangha, which had immense moral authority, also ensured that the country was run according to ‘Buddhist’ principles.

In the mid-16th century, King Bayinnaung waged relentless wars to acquire huge chunks of territory, and probably under pressure from the Sangha, imposed restrictions on Muslims. When he died in 1581, his kingdom included large chunks of Laos and Thailand, then known as Siam. Things started falling apart soon after his death, and the kingdom started eroding politically and physically.

Muslim sailors and traders from the Arab world as well as from neighbouring India started settling in Rakhine (then known as Arakan) around the 9th century. But many local Buddhists felt threatened by the newcomers and their alien culture, and there were several clashes between the two. In 1785, Burmese Buddhists from the south attacked and annexed Arakan, killing most Muslim Rohingya men and driving the others into neighbouring Bengal, then under British rule.

After the first Anglo Burmese War (1824-1826), the British seized Arakan and encouraged Muslim farmers from Bengal, including Rohingyas, to settle there, again fuelling local resentment.

After two more wars, in 1853 and in 1886, the British captured Burma and started bringing in more Hindus and Muslims from India to fill government jobs. The Buddhist monks – who thus lost their exalted position in the state as well as a large chunk of their revenue – were at the forefront of the protests against colonial rule as well as the influx of Indians, and many took part in violent protests in 1930 and 1938.
The riots in 1938 had another trigger, “A book published by an Indian Muslim author, reprinted with an attachment containing ‘highly disparaging references to Buddhism’.”

It is unclear whether religious or political provocateurs added this attachment, but it further inflamed communal and religious tensions. Demonstrators including monks demanded that the author be punished; if not, they threatened to treat Muslims as “enemy number one” and take action to “bring about the extermination of Muslims and the extinction of their religion and language.”

At this stage, “Some monasteries became armed sanctuaries and storage space for loot, contrary to monastic rules. More than 4,000 people were arrested, including monks accused of violence, arson and murder.”

A colonial British inquiry into the 1938 riots noted, “One of the major sources of anxiety in the minds of a great number of Burmese was the question of the marriage of their womenfolk with foreigners in general and with Indians in particular.”

Further, Randy Rosenthal, an editor and writing instructor at Harvard University who specialises in Buddhist studies and literature, asserts,

An important contributing factor to the current crisis in Rakhine occurred during WWII. Under Japanese occupation, Buddhists in Rakhine (then called Arakan) were recruited to fight as proxies for the Japanese… Local Muslims, in contrast, were armed

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30 Ibid.
and mobilized by the British as independent militias who performed guerrilla-attacks on Japanese forces. This meant that Buddhists and Muslims were fighting against each other, which resulted in the groups becoming geographically separated and “ghettoized,” with Muslims fleeing north to avoid the anti-Muslim violence of the Japanese offensives, and Buddhists fleeing south to avoid the anti-Buddhist violence of the guerrilla counter-offensives. After the war, waves of government violence against Rohingya occurred in 1954, 1962 (during the military takeover), 1977-78 (when the military forced the Rohingya to carry Foreign Registration Cards, and over 200,000 were driven into Bangladesh), 1992, 2001 (in response to the Taliban’s destruction of Buddhist statues in Bamiyan), and 2003.\textsuperscript{33}

The fact that the Rohingya Muslims lobbied for a separate Rakhine state towards the end of World War II, as well as after the British left in 1948, did not help matters. Describing them as ‘stateless Bangladeshis’, all the subsequent dispensations have refused to recognise them as Burmese citizens.

The military, which ruled Myanmar in some form or the other from 1962 to 2011, constantly fuelled the notion of the country and its religion being in danger from “outsiders.”\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{34} Interestingly, one of the finest accounts of the Muslims in Myanmar was written by Moshe Yegar, an Israeli diplomat who served in Rangoon in the early 1960s. His MA thesis, titled “The Muslims of Burma: A Study of Minority Group,” published in 1972 is probably one of the best works on the subject.
The transition to democracy in 2011 didn’t change much. Today, while Myanmar has no official religion, powerful elements in the new government support blatantly anti-Muslim Buddhist outfits with immense grass-roots support, such as the 969 movement and the Amyo Barthar Thathanar (Organisation to Protect Race and Religion), better known by the Burmese acronym Ma Ba Tha.

Popular and powerful monks like Ashin Wirathu, the spiritual leader of the 969 movement and head of the Ma Ba Tha, and his followers feed and promote the narrative that Muslims (or Chittagong Bengalis) from Bangladesh had sneaked in not just to dilute and erode the local Buddhist culture and population, but are part of a crusade to turn Myanmar into a Muslim nation. Describing mosques as enemy bases, these two outfits have publicly urged Buddhists to boycott Muslim shops and shun interfaith marriages.

“Some Buddhist leaders have justified violence against non-Buddhists,” an article in the *South China Morning Post* notes,

Sitagu Sayadaw is one of the most respected religious leaders in Myanmar, known for his teachings and for his philanthropic work. In a recent sermon, he clearly intended to suggest that the killing of those who are not Buddhist is justified on the grounds that those who do not follow Buddhist precepts and do not take refuge in the Buddha, his teachings and the monastic community, are less than human. Violence is justified if those persecuted are not Buddhists.35

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The current Rohingya crisis was sparked by the gang rape and murder of a young Rakhine woman in May 2012 by three Muslims, which spiralled into massive clashes between Muslims and Buddhists, often abetted by local security forces, which used reports that the Muslims were jihadis planning terrorist strikes in the country as an excuse. The anti-Muslim violence spread beyond the Rakhine state and Rohingya to Meiktila in central Myanmar, where a mosque was burnt down and over a 100 killed.

Ashin Wirathu, a seemingly unassuming monk of the Masoeyein Monastery, who was featured on the cover of Time magazine as “the Face of Buddhist Terror” in July 2013, insists that his movement is a peaceful one. But in his talks, he often stresses that Buddhism, which once extended all the way from Afghanistan in the West to Japan in the East, faces an existential threat from a rising Islam. He cites the razing of the Buddhist library in Nalanda/Bihar at the end of the 12th century, the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha by the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2001, and points out that Indonesia, once a Hindu and Buddhist nation, has since ‘fallen’ to Islam, while the Philippines is grappling with violent jihadists. Myanmar, he asserts, is next. “I am only warning people about Muslims. Consider it like if you had a dog that would bark at strangers coming to your house – it is to warn you. I am like that dog. I bark,” he asserts. What his followers do after he barks, he says, is not his problem.

This key fault-line between Buddhism and Islam is also visible in Thailand, and further west in the tiny island of Sri

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Lanka, both countries where militant Buddhist outfits have forged linkages with the Ma Ba Tha and 969 movement of Myanmar. The growing Islamophobia worldwide after the 9/11 attacks and the rise of Muslim terror outfits like the Islamic State (formerly Islamic State in Iraq and al Sham, ISIS; also, Daesh) wanting to turn the world into an Islamic caliphate, have further fuelled the ranks of Buddhists believing that they face a major threat. Social media is vigorously used to promote and build on these fears.

**Soldiers in Saffron**

In January 2019, General Apirat Kongsompong, the Commander in Chief of the Royal Thai Army, announced that he planned to have some of his soldiers ordained into the monkhood and assigned to posts in temples.37

This unusual announcement came days after a group of armed men stormed Wat Rattananuparb, a Buddhist temple in Sungai Padi District of the southernmost Thai province of Narathiwat, killing the abbot and three other monks, on January 18, 2019. While no one claimed responsibility, Muslim separatists increasingly active in the region were suspected to be behind the incident.

Narathiwat is one of Thailand’s three southernmost provinces (the others being Yala and Pattani) which have Muslim majorities in the Buddhist-dominated country. The three provinces and a small part of neighbouring Songkhla were part of a Malay sultanate annexed by Thailand in 1909, and tensions have simmered ever since. On the same day that the Narathiwat temple was stormed, a roadside bombing

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wounded five soldiers and a shootout between paramilitary rangers and Muslim rebels left one of the gunmen dead. Days earlier, a local Imam was shot dead, while four civil defense volunteers were killed in a drive-by shooting on January 10, in the neighbouring Pattani province.38

The violence in the south has been described as one of the deadliest low-intensity conflicts on the planet, with more than 7,000 people killed and over 11,000 injured since 2004.

According to the Thai Foreign Ministry, there are approximately 7.5 million Thai Muslims in the Kingdom or about 12 per cent of the total 62.5 million Thai population. While the majority of them are Sunnis, there are a few Shias and followers of Wahhabi sects too.

The social characteristics of the area are those of Malay Muslims, who form the majority of the people in the society and live in harmony with ethnic Thai and Chinese minorities. At present, there are about 1.4 million Thai Muslims in the three provinces, which accounts for 18 per cent of the Thai Muslim population…39

The ministry however insists that the problems in the three southern provinces are in general similar to those existing in other remote provinces of other regions in Thailand. They include poverty, underdevelopment, unemployment, low education, as well as discrimination


from corrupt and misbehaving officers. However, due to the specific social and cultural conditions of the South, these problems have been used as a pretext for creating divisions and attempting to separate the three southern provinces from the rest of Thailand by claiming the history of semi-autonomous Pattani over 100 years ago.\footnote{40}

The stark differences in culture, language and customs in the southern provinces have often led to friction, even though the government insists that these are more due to economic and cultural reasons rather than religious. It argues that though several separatist movements have tried to exploit these ethnic, religious and linguistic faultlines, they have been unsuccessful because their violent activities have undermined public safety and security.\footnote{41}

In late October 2015, Apichart Punnajanto, the monk who headed Bangkok’s Wat Benchamabophit Dusitwanaram, popularly known as the Marble Temple, urged his followers on Facebook to burn one mosque to the ground for every Buddhist monk killed in the Deep South.

Though the offensive post was quickly pulled down by the government, Phra (a prefix loosely translated as ‘Venerable’) Apichart Punnajanto, then 30, remained unrepentant. The death of a single monk should be considered a religious attack, he said in interview to \textit{Newsweek}. “I was stressed before, when monks got killed and injured,” he added. “Now it’s past that point—no stress, just revenge. This is why I said those things about burning the mosques: because I want revenge.” Punnajanto’s idol, according to the \textit{Newsweek} report, “is

\footnote{40}{Ibid.}
\footnote{41}{Ibid.}
Myanmar’s firebrand monk U Wirathu, whose anti-Muslim rhetoric helped stoke deadly riots in 2012 and 2013.”

Punnajanto declares, “What I want to do is to make Buddhists who are still sleeping and think things are beautiful, I want to make them aware of what’s going on. Muslims aren’t trying to invade just the three [southern] provinces; they are trying to occupy the whole country.”

Bangkok-based security analyst at IHS-Jane’s, Anthony Davis, observes, “There is a growing strain of anti-Muslim sentiment within the Buddhist sangha [monastic community] in Thailand…This thing isn’t some nasty little insect hidden away under a rock, it’s becoming mainstream.”

Several rounds of talks between the government and the rebels, including the Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN) have failed a Patani separatist movement in northern Malaysia and Southern Thailand, and the violence continues.

An AFP report on July 25, 2019, a day after Muslims rebels armed with grenades attacked a military outpost in Pattani and killed four soldiers before escaping with several machine guns, noted, “Insurgents operating in small, secretive village-level cells carry out near-daily bomb attacks and shootings in Thailand’s south – including the murder of Buddhist civilians and Muslims perceived to be collaborating with the state.”

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43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
Trouble in Paradise: Sri Lanka’s other war

The resignation of all nine Muslim Parliamentarians and two provincial governors in Sri Lanka after the coordinated bombings of Churches and hotels on Easter Sunday (April 21, 2019), exposed the deepening fault lines between the majority Sinhala Buddhists and the small Muslim community in Sri Lanka. Over 250 people were killed and hundreds injured in the attacks, claimed by Daesh (Islamic State).

The resignations came after Athuraliye Rathana, a powerful hardline Buddhist monk, lawmaker and adviser to President Maithripala Sirisena, went on a hunger strike demanding the removal of the two governors and a minister he accused of having links with the suicide bombers. The other eight Muslim ministers resigned in solidarity.

The links between the Buddhist clergy and politicians in Sri Lanka is overt, with many monks not just supporting, but joining nationalist political parties.

In March 2018, communal riots broke out in the eastern town of Ampara and subsequently spread to nearby Kandy. This followed a video purportedly showing a Muslim restaurant owner from the town admitting that the food he served Sinhalese was mixed with “sterilisation pills,” which went viral on social media, and the death of a Sinhalese truck driver who was assaulted by four Muslim men.46


Ramananda Sengupta

Angry Sinhalese mobs attacked Muslim establishments and mosques, and the latter responded in kind. At least two people were killed and scores hurt, and government declared an emergency to stem further violence.\(^\text{48}\) There were disturbing reports however that the local administration and the police had overtly sided with the Sinhalese.\(^\text{49}\)

Therevada Buddhists, who comprise almost 75 per cent of the population, monopolise the country and treated minorities (Hindus 12.6 per cent, Muslims 9.7 per cent and Christians 7.6 per cent) condescendingly even during the British Colonial rule. After independence in 1948, the government’s attempts to impose Buddhism by incorporating it into the constitution and enforcing the use of Sinhala as the official language angered the minorities, and sparked a violent movement for a separate homeland for Tamils, who live principally in the north and east of the island. The ensuing civil war, which began in the early 1980s, saw the Sinhalese, including monks, using Buddhist religious texts to justify attacks on Tamils. Just like India’s predominantly Buddhist Ladakh Scouts, the mostly Buddhist Sri Lankan Army found solace – and perhaps justification for their violence – in their religion. The war finally ended in 2009, after a massive military offensive and the killing of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) chief Velupillai Prabhakaran.

But, as the recent accusations which led to the resignation of all Muslim ministers clearly show, the Buddhist hardliners were quick to shift their target.


Apart from the hardline Jathika Hela Urumaya founded by Athuraliye Rathana, the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS, also known as Buddhist Power Force) is another outfit which has been in the forefront of the anti-Muslim violence in Sri Lanka. In 2013, the outfit, said to have links with the Ma Ba Tha and 969 movement of Myanmar, ran a virulent campaign demanding the boycott of stores selling *halal*-certified meat, alleging that Muslims were illegally slaughtering young calves. It also claimed that the All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama, which certifies *halal* products, was plotting to bring about Sharia law in Sri Lanka.

Other Sri Lankan Buddhist nationalist organisations such as the Sinhala Ravaya (The Roar of the Sinhalese and the Ravana Balaya (Ravana’s Force), have also got a shot in the arm with the Easter Sunday massacre, and the now familiar narrative about the “Muslim problem” has grown stronger.

**THE GODS OF WAR**

No paper on Buddhist violence would be complete without referring to the self-immolation by hundreds of Tibetan monks and nuns in Tibet and China, and some in India and Nepal.50

While insisting that he does not encourage such violence against the self, the Dalai Lama has praised the courage of these protesters. After initially blaming the “cultural genocide” unleashed by the Chinese for these acts, he later said he wanted to remain neutral on the issue.

In Vietnam, Mahayana Buddhist monk Thích Quảng Đức burned himself to death at a busy Saigon road intersection on June 11, 1963, to protest against persecution by the South Vietnamese regime. He was followed by five other monks.

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Today, the communist regime in Vietnam allows Buddhists to practice but watches them warily to ensure that radicals from neighbouring nations do not vitiate the atmosphere.

Even though none of the main religions of the world promote violence at a philosophical level, Faith has often been used to justify war and violence down the ages.

A ‘War Audit’ commissioned for the BBC programme *What the World Thinks of God* noted, in 2004,

All advocate peace as the norm and see genuine spirituality as involving a disavowal of violence. It is mainly when organised religious institutions become involved with state institutions or when a political opposition is trying to take power that people begin advocating religious justifications for war.51

A section of the *War Audit*, devoted to the situation in the first years of the 21st century, “looks at the most recent examples of serious religion related violence: inter-communal violence in Gujarat in India and Al Qaida’s war on the USA and its allies,” and examines “the three different fundamentalisms on show in these cases: Hindu, Muslim and Christian.”52

A subsequent section,

…asks whether it is possible to identify a list of states that are most likely to go to war by invoking the name of God. It notes the difference in the disposition to war in the name of God between these states and secular or atheistic states, such as China. A genuinely secular (atheistic) state may be less inclined to go to war than a state in which religion is very prominent, as long as the

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52 Ibid.
secular state is one which is not pursuing a millenarian or totalitarian ideology (such as Communism or Nazism) and as long as the state is one in which pluralism and tolerance of diversity are the norm.53

Buddhism, is referred to only in a footnote in the War Audit, but it is an interesting one:

Buddhism does not support war or any type of violence; none of the Buddhist scriptures advocate the use of violence as a means to resolve conflict or as a way of life. One of Buddha’s sermons powerfully illustrates Buddhism’s commitment to non-violence: ‘Even if thieves carve you limb from limb with a double-handed saw, if you make your mind hostile you are not following my teaching.’ ‘Hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world; it is appeased by love.’54

Non-violence, it adds, is at the heart of Buddhism. Indeed, the first of five precepts of Buddhism states: ‘I shall undertake to observe the precept to abstain from harming living beings’.55

Neuroscientist, philosopher, and author Sam Harris has no such illusions. In “Killing the Buddha”56 he argues that Buddhism’s philosophy, insight and practices would benefit more people if they were not presented as a religion.

The Chinese Buddhist monk Línjì Yìxuán’s exhortation to “Kill the Buddha” should be taken seriously, he says. “...as students of the Buddha, we should dispense with Buddhism.”57

53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
Buddhism is not spared in his long listing of recent religious violence, although he cites only the instance of Sri Lanka. Incompatible religious doctrines have balkanized our world into separate moral communities, and these divisions have become a continuous source of bloodshed. Indeed, religion is as much a living spring of violence today as it has been at any time in the past… The recent conflicts in Palestine (Jews vs. Muslims), the Balkans (Orthodox Serbians vs. Catholic Croatians; Orthodox Serbians vs. Bosnian and Albanian Muslims), Northern Ireland (Protestants vs. Catholics), Kashmir (Muslims vs. Hindus), Sudan (Muslims vs. Christians and animists), Nigeria (Muslims vs. Christians), Sri Lanka (Sinhalese Buddhists vs. Tamil Hindus), Indonesia (Muslims vs. Timorese Christians), Iran and Iraq (Shiite vs. Sunni Muslims), and the Caucasus (Orthodox Russians vs. Chechen Muslims; Muslim Azerbaijanis vs. Catholic and Orthodox Armenians) are merely a few cases in point. These are places where religion has been the explicit cause of literally millions of deaths in recent decades.”

In his underground bestseller titled *Skinny Legs and All*, author Tom Robbins has another take on religion. Religion is nothing but institutionalised mysticism. The catch is, mysticism does not lend itself to institutionalisation. The moment we attempt to organise mysticism, we destroy its essence. Religion, then, is mysticism in which the mystical has been killed. Or, at least diminished... not only is religion divisive and oppressive, it is also a denial of all that is divine in people; it is a suffocation of the soul… religion is a...
paramount contributor to human misery. It is not merely the opium of the masses, it is the cyanide.\textsuperscript{59}

On a lighter note, perhaps it is time to clear another misconception. Almost everyone is familiar with the Laughing Buddha, whose large belly and sack are believed to represent abundance and good luck. Listed among the seven Japanese Gods of luck and good fortune, his figurines adorn mantelpieces and cash registers around the world.

In reality, the image has nothing to do with the original Buddha, but is one of his many avatars, reportedly a 10th-century Chinese monk named Budai, a gregarious, pot-bellied monk who wandered from village to village carrying a large sack over his shoulder. (Budai means “cloth sack” in Chinese.) He was beloved by children and the poor, to whom he would give rice and sweets from his sack. On his deathbed, Budai penned a poem in which he revealed himself as the avatar of Maitreya, a deity also known as the “Future Buddha.” Crucially, perhaps, the world should pay more attention to his catch-phrase: “Let Go”.\textsuperscript{60}

Semantics aside, religion is a peculiarly human trait. And most humans, particularly when they feel threatened individually or collectively, or when they believe it would either bring or deprive them of wealth or power, are prone to violence. Buddhists, like the followers of any other religion, are humans first.

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\textsuperscript{60} Dave Roos, op. cit.
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India’s North East Region (NER) has faced a multitude of separatist and secessionist insurgencies since Independence. These insurgent groups, although up in arms against the state, did not have unified or common demands. While some were secessionist in nature [such as the Naga National Council (NNC) and United National Liberation Front (ULFA)], others such as Bodos, Kukis and Dimasas, demanded a separate state or autonomous District Councils within the Union of India. Throughout the course of conflict, neither the state nor the insurgents have been able to prevail upon each other, thereby sparking a long, attritional pattern of violence. Throughout the seven decades of insurgency in the region, neither Government forces nor major insurgent groups have been able to militarily prevail upon each other, although the Army and other Government Forces now have a permanent presence in the region. The presence of the Indian Army has been consolidated
in the region with two corps formations, 3rd and 4th, based in Rangapathar (Dimapur) and Tezpur (Assam).¹

Both parties have realised that they would eventually have to come to the negotiating table and conclude a mutually acceptable end state agreement.

However, the pattern of attrition seeps into the negotiation process as well, resulting in a long drawn out process. This also reflects the Government’s approach (irrespective of political dispensations over time), which is primarily aligned to a conflict management mode, rather than a resolution mode that could terminate the conflict.

A primary example for such long drawn out peace process is seen in the case of Nagaland, where initial informal meetings between Government of India (GoI) and National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak Muivah (NSCN-IM) resulted in the signing of a ceasefire agreement in 1997, over two decades ago. Although, more than 80 rounds of peace talks have also taken place, a conclusive peace treaty is still elusive. The ceasefire agreement was signed by the IK Gujral Government, but neither the then Government nor later dispensations have been able to reach a conclusive peace agreement.

Armed movements in the region commenced in 1956, with the NNC led by Angami Phizo raising the banner of rebellion. NNC was initially formed as a political platform in 1946, its predecessor being the Naga Club. The organisation initially demanded autonomy within erstwhile Assam, which previously consisted of present-day Nagaland, Meghalaya

and Mizoram. However internal rifts within NNC later led to secessionist demands. NNC’s armed violence continued till the signing of the Shillong Accord in November 1975. However, a faction of NNC refused to comply with the agreement and went on to form the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) in 1980. The torchbearers of this group were Isak Swu, Thuingsaleng Muivah and SS Khapleng. The NNC was quickly side-lined and NSCN became the main force in the region. In 1988, the NSCN split along tribal lineages into the NSCN-IM and NSCN-Khaplang (NSCN-K). In 2011, the NSCN-K split further into NSCN-KK (currently identified as NSCN-Kitovi-Neopao); and again in 2015, the new faction, NSCN-Reformation (NSCN-R) emerging.

In 1997, the government of India signed a ceasefire agreement with NSCN-IM, which had established itself as the most powerful of all insurgent groups in Nagaland. After more than 80 rounds of talks thereafter, a Framework Agreement was signed in 2015. On December 13, 2016, six Naga National Political Groups issued a joint statement saying that they had on their “own volition,” agreed to come together in the interest of the Naga people as a whole and formed an interim ‘Working Group’, which would negotiate with the government for a

\[2\] The Accord, thus states: “The representatives of the underground organisations conveyed their decision, of their own volition, to accept, without condition, the Constitution of India. It was agreed that the arms, now underground, would be brought out and deposited at appointed places. Details for giving effect of this agreement will be worked out between them and representatives of the Government, the security forces, and members of the Liaison Committee. It was agreed that the representatives of the underground organisations should have reasonable time to formulate other issues for discussion for final settlement.”, SATP, “Nagaland Accord-The Shillong Agreement of November 11,1975”, https://satp.org/document/paper-acts-and-ordinances/nagaland-accord-the-shillong-agreement-of-november-111975.
comprehensive peace accord acceptable to all the concerned parties and varied interests.

In the case of Mizoram, the two-decade long Mizo insurgency (1966-86), which ended with the Mizo Accord, is the only instance of an unambiguous resolution of conflict in north east India via a political peace process. The neglect towards the Mizo suffering during the 1959 famine was the cause of the two-decade long insurgency.³ A Mizo Cultural Society formed in 1955 was rechristened the Mizo National Famine Front (MNFF) on account of the famine. By 1961 the MNFF renamed itself as the Mizo National Front (MNF).⁴ Armed violence raged for two decades, commencing 1966, till the signing of the Mizo Accord in June 1986. Following the Accord, the state of Mizoram was created in February 1987 and MNF chief Laldenga became the first Chief Minister. Two important steps which probably ensured a rich peace dividend over the past three decades were the surrender of weapons by the MNF militants and a large rehabilitation plan which ensured that the surrendered militants were economically rehabilitated. Among the 614 surrendered rebels, 350 were given employment with the Government; 45 provided taxi permits; 15 allotted shops: and the rest were given government contracts.⁵ Under a unique surrender package, each of them

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was given INR 2,000 for their immediate needs. This was followed by another grant of INR 20,000 for buying household goods. Each was also given half a bigha of land (about 7,500 sq. ft.) to construct a house for which a grant of INR 40,000 was to be given. Except for the housing grant, other grants have been disbursed.⁶

In Manipur, the first insurgent group to be formed was in the Imphal Valley, the United National Liberation Front (UNLF), in 1964. Later, in the 1970s and 80s, groups like the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), People’s Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK), and Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) emerged and engaged in urban guerrilla activities. The initial issues that fuelled the insurgency were related to a sense of pride and distinct identity of the State, culturally associated with the long reigns of the Meitei kings. Other issues like the States’ merger, and the status of the meitelon language and identity, added to popular dissatisfaction and conflict.⁷

Secessionist movements based on separate ethnic ‘nationality’ were raging in the hills of the state, where Naga militant formations like NNC and NSCN-K were active. Moreover, the Mizo militant group -MNF was active in Mizo-Kuki dominant areas. The 1990s saw the insurgency worsen, with Naga-Kuki clashes following militant activities by Kuki armed groups in Moreh and neighbouring areas along the Indo-Myanmar border, where a lucrative border trade was concentrated.

⁶ Ibid.
The ceasefire agreements with the two powerful Naga groups – NSCN-IM (signed in 1997) and NSCN-K (signed in 2001) – brought relative peace in neighbouring Nagaland, and an extension of the agreement to the Naga inhabited areas in Manipur was subsequently proposed by the then Indian Government. However, there was a severe backlash in the Imphal valley, with apprehensions that such an extension would give credence to Naga claims on Manipuri lands, and undermine Manipur’s territorial integrity.

Most of the valley-based Manipuri groups refused to negotiate with the State and Union Governments. In 2004, UNLF, responding to peace overturns from the governor, laid down four pre conditions to initiate peace talks.8

In 2009-10, the ‘chairman’ of UNLF, R.K. Meghen alias Sanayaima was handed over to India by the Bangladeshi authorities.9 But, even after his arrest and 10 years of subsequent imprisonment, the group has not climbed down from its position. However, some Imphal Valley based militant groups – KCP-Lallumba, United Revolutionary Front (URF), KCP-Lamphel, United People’s Party of Kangleipak (UPPK) and two factions of KYKL-MDF – have signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoU)s with the Government of India and Government of Manipur.10

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Kuki militant formations started negotiations with the Indian Army in 2005. On August 22, 2008, a tripartite agreement was signed between the militant conglomerate and the Union and State Government. At present 25 militant groups, under two conglomerates—the Kuki National Organization (KNO) and the United People’s Front (UPF), have agreed to suspend operations but any peace process has to accommodate the diversity of the State’s ethnic groups, the sentiments of Valley residents, Manipur’s territorial integrity as well as the demands for integration of Naga and Kuki areas under one administrative arrangement. While the Meitei of Imphal Valley defend the territorial integrity of the State, the hill residents, mainly Nagas, demand the integration of all the Naga areas straddling Manipur and Nagaland. The Kuki’s want their areas under one administrative arrangement within Manipur.

As with Manipur, there are multiple conflicts in Assam. These conflicts are based on issues of Assamese cultural identity, land alienation of tribal communities, the ‘foreigners’ issue, autonomy of the hill districts and inter-tribal clashes for gaining control over land and resources. Civil society groups represented by the All Assam Students Union (AASU) and tribal interest by the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU), launched massive social movements, including the Assam movement of 1976-1985 and the Bodoland Statehood movement in the late 1980s. Non-acceptance or non-satisfactory outcomes of the movements or peace agreements with Government led to sections within the youth or hardliners picking up the gun to resolve their issues.¹¹

MoU’s with civil society organisations, AASU in 1985\textsuperscript{12} and ABSU in 1993\textsuperscript{13} in Assam, violence continued even after these accords. Many smaller groups have sprung up who proclaim themselves protectors of the communities that they claim to represent. Some of these are clearly driven by lucrative extortion opportunities. Three MoU’s were signed with Bodo, Karbi and Dimasa militants in 2003, 2011 and 2012, respectively. The Government is now negotiating with 13 insurgent groups with diverse demands and interests.

There are similarities in the causes of insurgent movements in Assam and Tripura. Both are linked to the massive migration to these States after the partition of the Indian subcontinent. The initial spurt of insurgency in Tripura erupted in the form of \textit{Seng Krak} (Clenched fist) after the Princely States merged with the Indian Union and subsequent plans to settle non-tribal refugees from East Pakistan in tribal reserve forest areas. The situation in East Pakistan which resulted in the influx of millions of refugees in the early 1970s reignited the insurgency in the State. The fear of the ‘indigenous’ tribal population becoming a minority in its own land moved the tribals to take up arms against the state. The Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) was formed on November 10, 1978, with plans to conduct insurgent activities in collaboration with the MNF of Mizoram.\textsuperscript{14}

Violence unleashed by the militants against non-tribal populations and government installations led to a crackdown by Security Forces. The subsequent peace process led to a MoU with TNV in 1988, but, as in the case of Nagaland and Assam,

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\item \textsuperscript{14} Tripura Backgrounder, \textit{SATP}, https://satp.org/backgrounder/india-insurgence/region/northeast-tripura.
\end{itemize}
a section of dissatisfied militants relaunched violent militancy in the form of the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) and All Tripura Tribal Force. While NLFT underwent several subsequent splits, the All Tripura Tribal Force was rechristened the All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF), and orchestrated an upsurge in violence. In 1993, Dasrath Deb became the first tribal Chief Minister (CM) of the State. After assuming power, he successfully negotiated with the ATTF and signed an MoS which led to the surrender of more than 1,600 cadres in March 1994 under an amnesty scheme offered by the State Government. But a group of ATTF cadres refused to surrender and kept the outfit alive. The NLFT and ATTF were subsequently banned under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.

The police led model of counter insurgency subsequently wiped out insurgency in the State. An MoU with the Nayanbashi Jamatia faction of NLFT was signed in 2004. L.H. Darlong, Tripura’s Principal Secretary of Tribal Welfare noted, in 2018, There was a peace talk with the insurgent outfit NLFT (NLFT-BM) three years back. Few insurgents surrendered after the peace talks. But there was no response from them after that. No one is aware of any peace talk which is in progress with NLFT now.

The insurgency in the State of Meghalaya started in 1992 with the formation of Hynniewtrep Achik Liberation Council (HALC). The State however was more of a victim of a spill-over effect of the insurgency from neighbouring Assam. A split in HALC resulted in the formation of Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC) in 1993. In 1995, the

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Achik National Volunteer Council (ANVC) was formed and it continued to be operational until it signed a tripartite ceasefire agreement with the state and central governments in 2004.

But there was a factional split soon after, although it was formally revealed in 2012. The newly formed group was identified as Breakaway faction of ANVC (ANVC-B). In 2013, the ANVC-B signed a tripartite draft agreement with the state and central governments, and in September 2014, a Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) was reached between the concerned parties. The MoS provided immunity to the cadres who were charged with criminal cases of assorted hues. According to MoS, “Criminal cases registered against members of the ANVC for non-heinous crime shall be withdrawn by
the state government”. It also states that the cases registered against ANVC members for “heinous crimes shall be reviewed case by case according to the existing policy on the subject, and, wherever feasible, steps for withdrawal of such cases will be initiated by the state government”. In the same year, an agreement was signed with ANVC and ANVC-B under which 748 militants surrendered their weapons at Dakopgre in Tura in West Garo Hills District in December 2014.

**COMPONENTS FOR A SUSTAINABLE PEACE AGREEMENT**

A peace agreement can be defined as a formal commitment between two hostile parties to end a war. A peace accord can range from a cease fire agreement to a framework for social and political changes. Accords which go beyond ceasefires and terms of reference for further talks are likely to include provisions related to independence/autonomy/power sharing, human rights and fair distribution of resource and employment. A peace process can also be defined as a process when people with inimical interests or ideas attempt to align or converge their interests which are acceptable, attainable and practical to all stakeholders. The most important consensus

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18 Ibid.


among stake holders should be to put an end to violence and resolve the issues at hand in a non-violent manner.

In India’s internal security landscape, accords are defined as constructs that the rivalling parties have made for themselves and once they have entered into, they seem not only to exist independently of whatever the signatories think about them, but shape and mould their thoughts and practices, laying down modalities on the basis of which their affairs are supposed to be conducted in the future.²¹

Some of the essential features required for lasting peace settlements resulting in overall removal of violence and feeling of alienation are:

**Democratic and consensual process**

The dialogue process should not be ‘dictated’ by one party alone. A consensus has to be built with in the negotiating parties as well as between both sides on the modalities of the negotiation process. Moreover, a mutually acceptable frame work and end state has to be concisely formed between and amongst the parties. For example, the Ao *Senden* (apex body of Ao Nagas) in its meeting on July 27, 2007 at Camp Hebron, in Dimapur (Nagaland) assumed responsibility for the problems afflicting the tribe while offering concrete solutions after consultations with all the different village representatives to the *Hoho*.

On the same day, the views of all the *Hohos* like Ao, Angami, Tangkhul, Jeme, Konyak, Sema, and the NSCN-IM, were listened to by around 5000 participants from all the Naga-inhabited areas of the Northeast. By the end of the day, a common consensus was reached for an indefinite extension of ceasefire between the NSCN-IM and the Union Government; transparency in the functioning of the NSCN-IM; support for

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²¹ Ibid.
the peace negotiations between the Union Government and the NSCN-IM; more representations from the Nagas in the formal peace talks; infrastructure development; and improvement in the security situation in conflict prone areas were reached.\textsuperscript{22}

\textbf{Trust and Transparency}

In the initial phase of a negotiation or peace process, it is essential that the trust deficit between both parties, who until recently has been actively involved in violence against each other, is effectively addressed. Specifically, in the northeast region, since the conflicts have been long drawn and protracted in nature, the trust deficit is a reality amongst the societal actors such as Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), Government representatives and insurgents. Building up trust and bringing a transparent process is essential as it would help in neutralising any other organisation or agency which could revamp the apprehensions of any hostile party and spoil the process.

Moreover, a transparent view of the complex issue at hand and that all the negotiators have a common understanding of the conflict is essential for any efficient peace process or negotiation.

\textbf{Inclusivity}

Peace process negotiation is inherently influenced by inclusivity. All the stake holders should be brought to the negotiating table, and the dialogue should also take into account the grievances, hopes and aspirations of all the stake holders. All the parties should be ready to set aside pre-

conceived notions and judgmental mindsets and hear out each other’s points of view. If the peace process does not have maximum number of people on board, a sustainable peace will be difficult to attain. A process of addressing the grievances and apprehensions of all stake holders should be identified and enacted upon to remove any residual grievances.

Both the negotiating parties have to have a clear and common end state in mind, which has to be acceptable for all parties involved and not leave any party aggrieved or feeling left out. If not, the aggrieved party might revert back to violence, thus, decreasing the peace dividend and prolonging the conflict. If the violence sustains, a future peace agreement may have to be penned with the violent party, which in turn may result in bitterness within the society resulting in fratricidal violence and targeted killings. A primary example for this is the Shillong Agreement of 1975. Although the NNC officially signed the cease fire agreement, Angami Phizo was either not consulted or by passed in the peace process.\(^{23}\) The faction of NNC led by Isak Swu, Thuingaleng Muivah and SS Khaplang formed the NSCN, which then continued the violent movement resulting in the ultimate failure of the accord.

**IDENTITY AND CONTEXT**

The major insurgencies in northeast India have been ethnic or identity based. The perceived lack of commonness between sections of society is a root cause of the feeling of ‘otherness’, resulting in violent movement. The initial aim of the dialogue process thus should be to address this “us and them” perception. Since parties involved in the negotiations would

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be from varied ethnic or religious or regional backgrounds, the dialogue process should be insistent on accommodating the identity of everyone. The aim being to stress on commonalities rather than differences, and the shared worldviews and ideas between both parties. The fear of loss of identity should be sympathetically addressed and steps initiated to retain and ensure the uniqueness of the ethnic groups.

Additionally, tribal rivalries or distinctions has also fanned ethnic militant actors in the region. Actions taken to diffuse or help over-ride these cultural or ethnic faultlines, particularly in the grass root level would go a long way to ensure a sustained peace initiative.

At the same time, the negotiators from the Government should be knowledgeable about the origins and context of the conflicts. Cultural familiarity and local knowledge are pertinent for the negotiating party to ensure that the process would move on unhindered and that no misunderstandings or animosities develop.

These components are likely to have a cascading effect on the peace process- if a democratic process is under taken it would automatically help in earning the trust of the opposing side, thereby helping the process to become transparent. This in turn evolves into a procedure with the support of more people thereby making it inclusive.

MIZO ACCORD: THE SUCCESS STORY

Circumstances leading to the Accord

The Mizo insurgency initiated in 1966 with ‘Operation Jericho’ by MNF later evolved into a guerrilla war of attrition.

24 Ibid.
25 David Buhril, “50 years ago today, Indira Gandhi got the Indian Air Force to bomb its own people”, The Scroll, March 5, 2016, https://scroll.in/
The MNF had bases primarily in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in the then East Pakistan (present day Bangladesh), where they ‘head quartered’ a parallel Government in Dhaka.\textsuperscript{26} They also received funding from the Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and between 1972–75 the MNF had a base in Islamabad.\textsuperscript{27} China also supported the Mizo insurgents. According to Zoramthanga, the current Chief Minister of Mizoram and ex- MNF insurgent, MNF insurgents had gone to China and “met Premier Zhou Enlai, Mao Zedong, Lin Biao and Chiang Ching” along with other Chinese leaders and they were given help by the Chinese in the form of arms.\textsuperscript{28}

However, the 1971 war and the creation of Bangladesh induced the Mizo rebels to shift their bases and headquarters from Bangladesh and they concentrated their bases in the Arakan region in Myanmar, where they were hosted by the Burma Communist Party (BCP), a Myanmar Insurgent Group backed by Beijing. As a result of this loss of their Bangladesh base, 356 MNF cadres led by MNF ‘vice president’ Lalnunmawia and MNF ‘defence minister’ R. Zamawia, surrendered to Indian SF’s on December 25, 1971.

Unlike East Pakistan authorities, the Myanmar Government was not sympathetic to the Mizo cause. In 1968


\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.

MNF, which had declared the Chin Hills (in Myanmar) as part of ‘greater Mizoram’, conducted attacks in which they lost 55 cadres. This did not go down well with Myanmar authorities. Moreover, hostility between MNF and the Myanmar forces, MNF could not contact Beijing for further support.

The creation of Bangladesh and the subsequent loss of bases and mass surrender resulted in a decrease in the tempo of violence, and indirectly, although not immediately, led to the Peace Accord of 1986. An immediate result of the decrease in tempo of violence was the creation of the Union Territory of Mizoram (which was earlier a part of Assam as Lushai Hill District).

After 1971, although the MNF top leadership including Laldenga and his family with his aides, namely Zoramthanga, the ‘secretary’, ‘captain’ Tawnluaia and ‘captain’ Lalsangliana found their way to Karachi and were given shelter, they found it difficult to contact or communicate with their headquarters in Arakan. However, after the creation of Bangladesh, Pakistan found little use for Mizo rebels.

Significantly, MNF also could not find any political support or sympathy from any other country for their cause. According to MNF ‘vice president’ Tlangchhuaka, “political aid to champion our cause was quite difficult to obtain and no one was ready to offer us.” As a result, the top leadership of MNF, including Sainghaka and Lalnunmawia, were convinced of a need for a peaceful solution.

MNF leader Laldenga himself seems to have been aware of the lack of political support. He had once stated that “Our party’s demand was self-determination for the Mizos, which

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does not necessarily mean secession from Indian Union, When I look twenty years ahead, I cannot see any international opinion in favour of us."\textsuperscript{32}

As early as 1973, while based in Pakistan, MNF leader Zoramthanga contacted Indian intelligence agencies, conveying his interest to engage in talks. Later he flew to Geneva from Pakistan to meet Indian intelligence officials, where he conveyed his willingness to return to India for peace talks.\textsuperscript{33} In a letter to Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, he stated that:

Since 1973 my officials have been meeting your representatives… As I had mentioned, I have no doubt in my mind that the solution of Mizoram Political system will have to be achieved within the constitution of India.\textsuperscript{34}

Later, in November 1975, as per his request, India arranged for MNF’s top leadership, including ‘vice president’, ‘army chief’ and ‘party president’, to join Laldenga in Cologne in Germany. Despite, differences arising between him and Tlangchhuaka the ‘vice president’ and Biakchhunga the ‘army chief’\textsuperscript{35}, the talks did not break down and on February 18, 1976, MNF leaders and Indian officials issued a signed press statement in which MNF leaders ‘acknowledged that Mizoram was an integral part of India’ and conveyed to the Indian government their decision to accept the settlement of the problem in Mizoram within the Constitution of India.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid, p. 198.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid, p. 181.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{36} Chawngsailova, 1997, op. cit., p.166.
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Later a MNF convention was organized in Calcutta (West Bengal) on March 1976 wherein Zoramthanga was ‘elected’ as ‘general secretary’. This gave the mandate for the MNF delegation to negotiate the peace settlement with the government. The convention helped turn a new page in the Mizo conflict, as it collectively decided to negotiate within the frame work of the Constitution of India. The convention also decided to convert MNF into a political entity in India. And in the effort to bring peace, it decided to halt all violence, collect and surrender weapons and gather all insurgent MNF personnel in camps within a month. The government, on its part, decided to suspend all operations against MNF cadres with the exception of those attempting to cross the International Boundary.

On July 1, a formal peace agreement was finally signed by the Indian government and the MNF, Under the July agreement, as it became known, the agreement MNF accepted that Mizoram was part of India and agreed to forgo violence.

But this agreement hit a roadblock following doubts regarding surrender of arms and opposition from MNF leaders based in Arakan, and government forces resumed the anti-insurgent operations. Some steps taken by the new Indian Government which came to power in 1977 also alienated the Mizo rebels, and the talks started to break down. In June 1977 Laldenga was asked to leave the country. However, he persisted in the resumption of the talks and pursued the dialogue with the then Home Minister Charan Singh. Nevertheless, the talks soon derailed as Laldenga refused to give up the demand of forming an interim Government under him and his colleagues.

37 Ibid, p. 186.
Cracks started to appear amongst the MNF leadership as well. In Laldenga’s absence three ‘presidents’ were elected by MNF based in Arakan. However, Laldenga was able to overcome the threat to his position and an MNF Assembly was convened in 1979 and Laldenga was elected as the ‘president’, while Zoramthanga was elected the ‘vice president’ and Tawnluia the ‘army chief’. Additionally, those who opposed Laldenga’s leadership were dismissed from MNF. But the talks were dead.

**THE ACCORD OF 1986**

The next attempt at political settlement was made after Indira Gandhi came back to power. Laldenga met the Prime Minister on April 4, 1980 and both sides agreed to a ceasefire and the talks resumed on April 13, 1980. Subsequently a ceasefire was ordered by MNF on June 16, 1980. However, the peace process was terminated again in 1982, after incumbent Chief Minister (CM) T. Sailo refused to step down from power to accommodate Laldenga as the CM. The ceasefire agreement also broke down, and insurgent actions and Counter Insurgency operations started again. After the breakdown, an organization formed by nine church denominations in Mizoram, the Mizoram Church Leaders Committee (MCLC) started talking with both the MNF and the government in an attempt to rekindle the peace process. In April 1984, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited Mizoram, where representatives from the MCLC met her and submitted a memorandum asserting that the MNF was ready to come to the negotiating table. This restarted the stalled peace process and on September 6, 1984, Laldenga declared that he

41 Ibid.
was ready to order an immediate ceasefire agreement to create a conducive environment for settlement. He arrived in Delhi on October 29, 1984. However, Indira Gandhi was assassinated on October 31, 1984, the day on which he was slated to meet her. This again pushed back the signing of the peace agreement.

The negotiations picked up later when Laldenga met Rajiv Gandhi on February 15, 1985 and the government entrusted Home Secretary S. Pradhan with the negotiations. Earlier, these were spearheaded by G. Parthasarathy. In an attempt to pressurise the government and MNF to accelerate the peace process, students of Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) started a state-wide agitation in Mizoram on March 12, 1986. The Mizo students organised a relay fast and a general shutdown throughout the state on June 3 and June 27. On June 15 Laldenga returned to Delhi for peace talks while a political mechanism was devised for the then Mizoram CM Lalthanwala to resign to make way for the MNF supremo. According to the deal, on a date agreed between Laldenga and the Indian Government, Lalthanwala would resign and Laldenga would be elected as the leader of the Government and be sworn in as Chief Minister. The ‘Memorandum of Settlement’ was signed on June 30, 1986.

Thus, the Mizo insurgency which raged for two decades from 1966-86 was brought to a peaceful conclusion. According to the signed accord,

Notwithstanding anything contained in the Constitution, no act of Parliament in respect of

(a) Religion or Social practices of the Mizos,
(b) Mizo customary Law or procedure,
(c) Administration of Civil and Criminal Justice involving decisions according to Mizo customary Law,

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44 Ibid, p. 212
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(d) Ownership and transfer of land, shall apply to the State of Mizoram unless the Legislative Assembly of Mizoram by a resolution so decides.45

MNF agreed to a time bound process of surrendering its weapons and ammunition and return to civil life for its cadres. MNF also stated that they would not extend any support to TNV, PLA, or any such groups by way of training, supply of arms, or in any other matter. Reciprocating this, the government pledged robust steps for rehabilitation of MNF cadres as well as compensation programs for the families of those killed in the violence. Other provisions included provision of statehood to Mizoram (which was then a Union Territory). Additionally, the Mizos were reassured that their customary traditions and religious practices would be respected.

SOME OTHER SIGNIFICANT PROVISIONS OF THE ACCORD

• Inner line Regulation, as now in force in Mizoram, will not be amended or repealed without consulting the State Government.

• The rights and privileges of the minorities in Mizoram as envisaged in the constitution shall continue to be preserved and protected and their social and economic advancement shall be ensured.

• State will be at liberty to adopt any one or more languages to be used for all or any of the official purposes of the State.

• State would have its own University and High Court.46

46 Ibid.
Today the Mizo Accord is considered to be the most successful instance of conflict resolution in northeast India. After the signing of the accord, instances of insurgency related violence have been negligible with only about 49 fatalities being recorded between 1992-2019 (till June 3, 2019).

![Comparative Data between Mizoram and other Insurgency Affected States in North-East](image)

Figure 2: Comparative data between Mizoram and other insurgency affected states in North-east

**FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESS OF ACCORD**

Some of the factors which have to the successful negotiation of peace accord and factors which constituted to the sustenance of the peace are:

*Time bound process and a Flexible Political end state*- Unlike the ongoing Naga peace process, the Mizo peace process was shorter. After the collapse of July agreement of 1976, the next round of peace talks was initiated in 1980 when Indira Gandhi came to power. Although she was assassinated in 1984, it did not spell an end to the talks. Her successor was also committed to the peace process.
Both the government and the Mizo rebel leadership displayed astute flexibility during the peace negotiations. Although the MNF started as a secessionist movement, they later displayed political flexibility by giving up the demand for an independent ‘greater Mizoram’, one of the pre-conditions set by the government for talks. A negotiation can only be successful if both parties can empathize and accommodate each other, and both parties in this case were ready to do so. On the government’s part, it was ready to make political changes in the state Government and allow MNF’s Laldenga to become the CM of the state.

Absence of factionalism and internal consultations- MNF continued to be homogenous entity throughout the span of armed insurgency. Hence the peace process was much less complicated as the GoI had only one insurgent group to deal with. Moreover, Laldenga continued to be the undisputed leader of the group. Although there were some moves against Laldenga, he was able to resolve the internal differences and consolidate his influence in the group, so that he could take a decision on behalf of the group which was acceptable to the rank and file. Moreover, Laldenga also consulted his organization members at every step of the process. Intra- MNF discussions were almost an integral part of the Mizo peace process. Although these internal consultations may have resulted in delays and back-tracking, this process did ensure that there was no internal dissatisfaction within the MNF leadership. And when the accord was signed all internal grievances were heard and addressed, resulting in a consensual decision within MNF to sign the peace accord.

Unity, Political transition and Stake-holdership- The Mizo movement was built on an inclusive ethnic identity comprising diverse Mizo sub groups. A probable reason for
the MNF not fracturing into factions may also have been the inclusive regional nature of the organisation, unlike that of the Naga’s, Bodo’s or ULFA. The MNF was thus able to align itself with all sections of the Mizo community and mobilize them throughout the insurgent movement, as well as the peace process. Moreover, this inclusiveness also enabled the civilians to exert pressure on the actors involved in negotiation to bring the peace process into a conclusive end at the earliest.

After the signing of the accord in 1986, MNF rapidly evolved into a political party and integrated into the mainstream politics. The successful transition from an insurgent group fighting the authorities into that of a full-scale political party which was part of a system which MNF was up in arms against showed the political sense and organisational flexibility of the MNF. With transition into a political party which came to power in the state, the rebels became a direct stakeholder in ensuring that the accord would not break down and that there was no renewed violence in the state. This stakeholder ship cascaded to strengthen MNF’s commitment to the accord.

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The oldest and most formidable insurgency in the region is that of the Nagas. There were several peace initiatives taken by the government and civil society to resolve the conflict. Starting from the pre-independence Akbar Hydari Agreement
of 1947 to the latest Framework Agreement of August 2015, there have been four key peace initiatives so far.

**THE NAGA-AKBAR HYDARI ACCORD 1947**

The then Governor of Assam, Sir Akbar Hydari, visited Kohima, from June 27 to 29, 1947, and held long discussions with leaders of the NNC and various tribal groups. The result was the Nine-Point Understanding between the Governor and the NNC, giving broad concessions to NNC in the domain of Judicial, Executive, Agriculture, Education and Forest Departments, as well as Legislative, Land and Taxation issues.

**TWO SALIENT POINTS WITH REGARD TO THE UNDERSTANDING**

Boundaries – That present administrative divisions should be modified so as (1) to bring back into the Naga Hills District all the forests transferred to the Sibsagar and Nowgong Districts in the past; and (2) to bring all Nagas under one unified administrative unit as far as possible. All the areas so included would be within the scope of the proposed agreement. No areas would be transferred out of the Naga Hills without the consent of the Naga Council.48

Period of Agreement – The Governor of Assam as the Agent of the Government of the Indian Union will have a special responsibility for a period of 10 years to ensure the observance of the agreement. At the end of this period the Naga Council would be asked whether they require the above agreement to be extended for a further period or a new agreement regarding the future of Naga people was to be arrived at.49

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49 Ibid.
Thus, the essential feature of the nine-point agreement was providing integration of Naga areas, protection from outsiders, special powers in the sphere of judiciary, economy and decentralization of administration to the NNC, and a provision (clause 9) of review after 10 years. The agreement was signed between Governor Hydari and representatives of different tribes. Next year, on December 28, 1948, Governor Hydari passed away, undermining the implementation of the agreement.\textsuperscript{50}

Moreover, a faction led by Apatani Zapu Phizo denounced the agreement and conducted a controversial ‘referendum’. This faction claimed that in the plebiscite, 99 per cent of Nagas had preferred separation from India. Subsequently, an armed faction of NNC emerged, undertaking violent attacks against Government forces. Naga Hills (then under undivided Assam) was declared a disturbed area by the government of India and the Army was called in.

Meanwhile, civil society and tribal groups continued their efforts to bring about an acceptable solution and bridge the divide. A resolution was adopted in Naga People’s convention held in August 1957 for a unified Naga Hills-Tuensang area within the Indian Union.\textsuperscript{51} On December 20, 1957, Naga Hills-Tuensang Area (NHTA) was created as Autonomous District.

\textbf{SIXTEEN POINT AND FORMATION OF NAGALAND}

The NHTA arrangement did not arouse much enthusiasm. As a result, three years later, another accord was signed in 1960 between the Naga People’s Convention (NPC) and


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the Government. The 16-point agreement was preceded by demands placed by the delegates of the NPC/ Congress (described as moderates) before the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru on July 26, 1960. Subsequently, agreement was reached during the meeting between the Indian Foreign Secretary Subimal Dutta and NPC delegation on July 27-28, 1960.

In the mid- and late- 1960s, violence by NNC continued intermittently along with the counter-insurgency drive by the SFs. Parliament passed the 13th Amendment to the Constitution in 1962 and formed the state of Nagaland on December 1, 1963. The NPC and peace mission held talks with Naga underground group. During the same period, tribal differences led to conflict within the Naga underground and much blood was shed.

Critics argue that division and mistrust within the Naga society started with NPC signing the 16-point agreement. The NPC was not a party to the ‘Naga conflict’ and hence the agreement failed to pacify the rebels.

Meanwhile, separately, there were eight rounds of talks from 1964 to 1968 with NNC, resulting in a Cease Fire Agreement, which was signed on September 6, 1964. However, negotiations broke down by 1968, as a combined result of three factors. The primary reason was continued insurgent violence despite the ongoing negotiations. Second, a political vacuum created on the government side with the quick demises of successive heads of state, Jawaharlal Nehru (1964) and his successor Lal Bahadur Shastri (1966). And third, the

overtures made by the NNC towards China also resulted in the breakdown of talks.

The ceasefire which was applicable in Manipur’s Mao, Tamenglong and Ukhrul Sub Divisions (Naga dominated areas in Manipur) was called off on September 1, 1972, after the then Chief Minister (CM) of Nagaland Hokishe Sema was ambushed by NNC militants.

A split within NNC also occurred during the talks, with the formation of the Revolutionary Government of Nagaland (RGN) under the leadership of Scato Swu, the ‘president’ of FGN.

**SHILLONG ACCORD 1975**

The 1971 liberation of Bangladesh had destroyed the militant sanctuaries in East Pakistan. Therefore, a large group of militants had surrendered after the war and were rehabilitated. Talks were restarted with the Naga underground groups resulting in the 1975 Shillong Accord.

The agreement was signed between Nagaland Governor L.P. Singh, representing Government of India and I. Temjenba, S. Dahru, Z. Ramyo, M. Assa and Kevi Yalley, representing the underground organisations, on November 1975. In the Shillong Accord, members of the Naga underground unconditionally accepted the Constitution of India and also agreed to deposit arms. However, the accord was signed by ‘underground’ leaders in their personal capacity and not as leaders of an organisation.

Importantly, Phizo, the NNC leader did not sign the accord, and another influential hardline group led by Thuingaleng Muivah and Isak Swu also saw the accord as a ‘surrender’. Violence resumed in the late 1970s. The rebels were now stationed in Burma and operated along the Indo-Myanmar
border, and were clearly not interested in talks.\textsuperscript{54} In 1980, NSCN was formed by the trio of Isak Chisi Swu, Thuingaleng Muivah and S.S. Khaplang

\textbf{INCREMENTAL PROGRESS}

Peace talks between the NSCN-IM and the Government of India started in the early 1990s with Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao initiating the process. The next Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda cemented the initiative when he met Swu and Muivah in Zurich in Switzerland on February 3, 1997, resulting in a Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) five months later. Atal Bihari Vajpayee took the process to the next level, meeting Swu and Muivah.\textsuperscript{55} As a result, on July 1997, a CFA was reached and became operational from August 1, 1997. This led to Designated Camps in Nagaland and “Camps Taken Note Of” in Manipur, i.e., Oklong, Bunning and Chandel Camps,\textsuperscript{56} for the Naga underground cadres. In 1998, an informal CFA was agreed upon with NSCN-K, which was later formalised in 2001. A Ceasefire Monitoring Board (CFMB) was formed, comprising representatives of the Central and State governments along with militants, to oversee the implementation of ground rules.\textsuperscript{57}

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On 14 June 2001, during the annual review meeting between the government interlocutor and NSCN-IM, the ceasefire was extended “without territorial limits”. The decision led to massive protests in the neighbouring State of Manipur, where the Valley residents (mostly Meitei) felt that such a move could eventually lead to a division of the State. The Union Government was forced to withdraw the decision on June 24, 2001, to pacify Manipuri sentiments.

The ban on the NSCN-IM was lifted in 2002. This in turn facilitated easier movement of the Swu-Muivah duo for peace talks.

MAJOR MILESTONES

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s 2003 Nagaland visit and statement: Nagas (especially militant groups engaged in negotiation) consider the speech in Kohima by the Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee during his visit to the State as a landmark. Vajpayee recognised the ‘unique Naga history’, which formed the basis of the ongoing negotiations, observing: “As far as the Central Government is concerned, let there be no doubt in anyone’s minds that we are as keen as you are to achieve permanent peace with honour and dignity for the people of Nagaland. We fully respect your unique identity. It will be protected. We are proud of your culture. It too will be protected.”

Indefinite extension of NSCN-IM Ceasefire Agreement: From 1997-2007 the cease fire agreement was renewed annually. However, in 2008, both parties agreed to an indefinite CFA extension. The indefinite CFA has continued to be effective till date. The significance of indefinite ceasefire with NSCN-IM can be understood when compared with Suspension of Operations agreement signed with another northeast based militant group. In case of other militant groups, the SoO is periodically (ranging between six months to a year) renewed. For instance, the SoO with NSCN – Neokpao-Kitovi (NSCN-NK) and NSCN-R was extended for a period of one year (with effect from 28th April, 2018-till 27th April, 2019).

‘Covenant of Reconciliation’: There has been a cyclical pattern of violent upsurge during the CFA period mostly in the Naga inhabited areas of the Northeast region. This was mostly attributed to the rising factionalism. Naga Factionalism (internecine violence between different Naga factions) was at its peak in the years 2008, 2007 and 2006 with 119 killings (79 incidents), 90 killings (62 incidents), and 74 killings (60 incidents), respectively.61 There was a sharp drop in such killings in 2009 and 2010, mostly due to the ‘Covenant of Reconciliation’ (CoR) signed by the top leaders of NSCN-K, NSCN-IM and the Federal Government of Nagaland/ (FGN/NNC) on June 13, 2009. This followed a Naga Reconciliation meet in Chiang Mai in Thailand from June 1 to June 8, 2009.

Signing of Framework Agreement in 2015: On August 3, 2015, GoI and NSCN-IM signed a Framework Agreement essentially for resolution of the protracted Naga issue. The agreement was described as creating a preamble for a final resolution.

Formation of Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs) and widening of peace talks: NNPG was formed by NSCN- NK, NSCN-Reformation (NSCN-R) and four factions of NNC – Federal Government of Nagaland (FGN), NNC- Parent Body, Non-Accord faction of NNC/National People’s Government of Nagaland (NPGN/NNC-NA), and Government Democratic Republic of Nagaland /NNC-NA (GDRN) on December 14, 2016. The GoI interlocutor R.N. Ravi was also engaged with these groups to make the process more inclusive. NSCN-IM had expressed some reservations to GoI on NNPG’s involvement. The issue was sorted out after the Government assured NSCN-IM that the talks with NNPGs was informal in nature.

Stakeholder consultations during talks and after signing of Framework Agreement: Before signing the Framework Agreement, Naga Hoho, Naga Students’ Federation (NSF), Naga Mothers’ Association (NMA) and Naga legislators from Manipur and Nagaland were taken into confidence. An office was set up at Vigyan Bhavan in New Delhi where Naga militant leaders, civil society members and student groups could walk in to meet the government interlocutor R.N. Ravi with prior intimation.

Supra State Model Breakthrough and protest from neighbouring states: In 2011 media reported that

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the negotiations between the government and the NSCN-IM faction was in its final stages. The final settlement envisaged a “special federal relationship” between India and Nagaland and the creation of a “supra-State body” for the Nagas of Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh to “preserve, protect and promote their cultural, social and customary practices”. But the Assam and Manipur State leadership were not enthusiastic about the “supra-State body” and the agreement was never signed.66

HURDLES

NSCN-K Ceasefire agreement with Myanmar (2012) and 2015 unilateral abrogation of ceasefire with India: In 2011, late Khole Konyak and N. Kitovi Zhimomi parted way with Khaplang and formed NSCN-KK (now known as NSCN- NK). The 2011 split weakened the NSCN-K. Sensing that it was being left out of the peace talks, the outfit began clamouring that Naga nationalism was being stifled by the Indian government with its peace talks with NSCN-IM. In 2012, the NSCN-K signed a ceasefire agreement with Myanmar, allowing it greater freedom of movement within that country.67 On March 27, 2015, NSCN-K unilaterally exited the ceasefire, declaring that “any ‘meaningful peace and political interaction’ between the two entities (NSCN-K and the Indian government) should be premised on the concept that Naga’s were sovereign people.” In 2017, S.S Khaplang passed away, and in 2018 the outfit was again divided with Myanmarese national Yung Aung assuming responsibilities and expelling the Indian leader Khango Konyak. The Khango Konyak led group joined the talks in 2019.

The issues of integration, separate flags and Constitution remains the most contentious: According to a report submitted to the Rajya Sabha, NSCN-IM still insists on integration of Naga inhabited areas, though it had given up its demand of sovereignty. According to 2017 NSCN-IM headquarters press release:

The issue of integration of all Naga territories is an integral part of the ongoing Indo-Naga political dialogue. Naga territories, which have been kept apart arbitrarily and indiscriminately by the British on the first place and then further divided between Burma (now Myanmar) and India under the leadership of then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru without the knowledge and consent of the Naga people, is unacceptable. Just as there cannot be a kingdom without territory, the Indo-Naga political talks, sans integration of all the contiguous Naga areas, will be a futile exercise”.

Most recently, NSCN-IM ‘general secretary’, Thuingaleng Muivah, in an interview to Northeast Live on February 16, 2019, declared, “there will be one Nagalim, only one government our flag and our constitution must be there. This is the stand we have given…”

On March 1, 2019, the present interlocutor to Naga Talks, R.N. Ravi has conceded that symbolic issues such as Naga constitution and flag remain issues that need to be resolved.

Figure 4: Nagaland Conflict Chronology
ACCORDS IN ASSAM

Multiple insurgent groups from the state with varied aims are negotiating with the Indian Government. The Government is also engaged with militant formations representing different regions and ethnicities in the state within the framework of peace talks. In light of these complexities, the various diverging issues and initiatives taken by Government with respect to Bodo, major and minor Hill tribe groups, Adivasi and Assamese outfits are discussed below.

BLT ACCORD

The agitations for a separate State for plain tribals later translated into a quest for a Bodo State in the mid-1980s. The ‘cultural hegemony’ of Assamese speaking people in the State further alienated the Bodos (the largest plain tribal group). A Separate Statehood movement led by the All Bodo Student’s Union (ABSU), with the war cry of dividing Assam 50:50, aroused the emotions of the youth. Armed militant groups also became part of this fight for a separate homeland. The oldest such groups, Bodo Security Force (BdSF), under the leadership of Ranjan Daimary, was formed on October 3, 1986, to fight for a ‘sovereign state’ of Bodoland. On November 25, 1994, the BdSF rechristened itself the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB). Another militant group, Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT), with an aim to carve out a separate ‘Bodo State within India’, came into prominence in the mid-1990s.

Meanwhile, the Bodo Autonomous Council (BAC) was formed in 1996, after an agreement was signed between ABSU and the State Government. The principal issue that remained unresolved even after the signing of this accord was the number of villages to be included within the BAC.
But BAC failed to resolve the Bodo question. As a result, the Government engaged in a three-year long dialogue with BLT, one of the most violent Bodo militant groups operating in the region. In 2003, an MoS was signed between BLT and the Union and State Governments, leading to the formation of the autonomous Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) in Assam under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. After signing the accord, BLT chief, Hagrama Mohilary had said, “If the BTC accord signed yesterday is executed in letter and spirit, the Bodos will not have to go for another accord in future to assert their rights and development. BTC is capable of fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of the Bodos.”

However, the powerful militant group NDFB was not a part of the process and opposed the formation of BTC, believing it would undermine its demand for a ‘sovereign Bodoland’.

In 2010, the Bodoland People’s Front (BPF) (a political party formed after the dissolution of BLT) went back to its stance demanding a separate Bodo State. A resolution was passed declaring, \textit{inter alia},

\begin{quote}
...it is unanimously felt by all the people of Bodoland that the contentious issues... can be resolved only by creation of a separate Bodoland State. Therefore, the resolution has been moved, as decided by the Executive Council of BTC on January 20 last, ‘for bringing permanent peace and all-round development to the Bodoland area’.
\end{quote}

The genesis and continuity of the insurgency in Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao (erstwhile N. C. Hills) in Assam were mainly due to prolonged neglect of the region by the central and State Governments, the strategic location of these underdeveloped regions, and ethnicity. In the late 1980s, a movement was launched for an Autonomous State comprising undivided Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills (now Dima Hasao) under Article 244A of the Indian Constitution. The movement could not attain its stated objective and the principal group behind it, the Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC) is now almost non-existent. In the early 1990s, Dimasa and Karbi militant groups made an appearance with help from Naga separatists who were active in these Districts, using it to escape counter insurgency operations in the neighbouring States of Nagaland and Manipur, and also for extortion activities. After the Government launched counter insurgency operations in these Districts to contain militant activities, an SoO was signed with Dima Halam Daogah (DHD) and the Karbi militant group, United People’s Democratic Solidarity (UPDS). As seen in the case of several other militant formations, these groups splintered, and factions were increasingly involved in ethnic violence and fratricidal killings. However, at present all the armed groups except Karbi Longri North Cachar Hills Liberation front (KLNLF) have been disbanded.

The Karbi militant group UPDS was formed in March 1999 with the merger of two outfits in Assam’s Karbi Anglong District, the Karbi National Volunteers (KNV) and Karbi People’s Front (KPF). In 2002, UPDS agreed to a ceasefire
agreement with the Government. After nearly a decade of the signing of SoO, UPDS signed a tripartite MoS with the Central and State Governments on September 25, 2011. The Anti-Talks faction of UPDS, rechristened Karbi Longri N.C. Hills Liberation Front (KLNLF) continued its violent activities till its surrender in 2010. After KLNLF’s surrender, another faction, Karbi People’s Liberation Tigers (KPLT) emerged to continue violent activities. Counter insurgency operations have weakened KPLT and the group is now largely defunct.

The MoS signed with UPDS promised to convert the autonomous council to a territorial council, increase the seats under the council, and raise financial support and special packages amongst other provisions.

**MoS WITH DHD**

In N.C. Hills, Bharat Langthasa launched a militant group named Dimasa National Security Force (DNSF) in the early 1990s to fight for the cause of Dimasa tribals. Four years later, its ‘chairman’ Bharat Langthasa, along with a large number of cadres, surrendered to the government on November 17, 1994. Soon afterwards, Jewel Garlosa alias Mihir Barman floated the Dima Halam Daogah (DHD) in 1995, with the stated goal of forming a separate Dimasa State named Dimaraji. The outfit, was involved in various acts of violence in the District and neighbouring regions, until a ceasefire agreement was signed between the DHD leadership and the Government of India on January 1, 2003, in order to peacefully resolve the conflict. An year later, however, Jewel Garlosa broke away to form the

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Jewel faction of DHD (DHD-J) also known as Black Widow (BW). The ‘commander-in-chief’ Pranab Nunisa and ‘vice-president’ Dilip Nunisa took charge of what was left of DHD after the split, and called it DHD-N. On September 23, 2004, the undivided DHD team met the then Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil and submitted a memorandum demanding a separate homeland for the Dimasa tribals. After the split DHD-J engaged in large-scale violence throughout N.C. Hills and neighbouring districts. On March 8, 2008, Jewel Garlosa was arrested in Bangalore.

The following year, two batches of Black Widow militants surrendered along with their weapons. On October 8, 2012, the Central and the State Governments signed a MoS with both factions of the DHD – the DHD-N and the DHD-J. The MoS principally provides for enhanced autonomy for the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC) and a special package for socio-economic and educational development of the area. A special economic package of INR 2 billion (INR 400 million per annum), over and above the Plan allocation, for the subsequent five years was to be provided to the DHATC, to undertake special projects. The appointment of an interlocutor hastened talks with UPDS and DHD.76 The arrest77 of top DHD-J leaders Jewel Garlosa and Niranjan Hojai also forced the belligerent group to surrender its arms and agree for peaceful resolution.

Nevertheless, the two DHD factions were the greatest violators of the SoO agreement. 462 cadres were arrested and

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82 weapons recovered during the SoO period. Cadres of these militant groups or their splinters have also been suspected to be involved in major ethnic clashes (during 2001-2009)-such as Hmar-Dimasa, Karbi-Kuki Karbi-Dimasa and Zemi Naga-Dimasa in these Hill Districts.

Apart from above mentioned MoSs which have been finalised, talks are currently ongoing with several other militant groups based in the State.

ONGOING TALKS WITH ULFA

Large scale violent activities were launched by the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) from the late 1980s. The Government response was precipitated by the abduction and killing of Soviet coal engineer Sergei Gretchenko from Margherita in 1991.

The counter insurgency Operations codenamed Bajrang and subsequently Rhino were launched to contain rising violence. Following the crackdown and reprisals by ULFA, a ceasefire was announced in 1991. In 1992, ULFA had given a written proposal for peace talks, with almost the entire leadership onboard, with the exception of Paresh Baruah. The process did not make any headway as the ULFA leadership backtracked and slipped out of the country. Even as the talks


failed, a large number of ULFA cadres, led by the head of its ‘publicity wing’ Sunil Nath, surrendered to the Government.\textsuperscript{80}

Another set of surrenders took place after the Bhutan operations. In 2003, the Royal Bhutan Army launched Operation All Clear to flush out Indian militant groups, mainly ULFA, Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) and NDFB, operating from its territory. More than 30 rebel camps were reportedly destroyed, and a large number of rebels were either arrested or killed. All those arrested were subsequently handed over to India. Thereafter, several hundred rebels, mostly belonging to ULFA and NDFB, surrendered before the Indian Government.

In 2005, ULFA constituted an 11-member People’s Consultative Group to prepare the ground for formal peace talks with the Government. Unfortunately, it pulled out of the peace process in September 2006, following serious differences with the Government, particularly over its insistence that the ‘sovereignty of Assam’ be accepted as a pre-condition for talks.

It took two years of sustained efforts by the State Government to bring ULFA onboard for a peace process. On June 24, 2008, ‘Alpha’ and ‘Charlie’ Companies of ULFA’s 28\textsuperscript{th} Battalion declared a ‘unilateral ceasefire’ with the Government.\textsuperscript{81}

Meanwhile, improved security cooperation between Bangladesh and India led to the handing over of top ULFA


leaders, including Arabinda Rajkhowa, Raju Baruah, Chitraban Hazarika, Sashadhar Choudhury, to India by the Bangladeshi authorities between November and December 2009.  

Except for Paresh Baruah and Anup Chetia, all the other leaders now came on board for peace talks.

After agreeing to unconditionally participate in talks with the Central Government in February 2011, the Pro-Talks Faction of ULFA (ULFA-PTF) signed a tripartite agreement for Suspension of Operations (SoO) with the Centre and State Governments in September of that year. Paresh Baruah announced the formation of ULFA-Independent to chart a separate path. In 2015, ‘general secretary’ of undivided ULFA Anup Chetia had been handed over to Indian authorities by Bangladesh. In 2011, retired Intelligence Bureau (IB) Director, P. C. Haldar was appointed as the interlocutor for the group, and continued till 2016. Latest reports indicate that an accord with the group is almost ready, as the Government is ready to consider the major demands that were forwarded to it by the outfit

**TALKS WITH NDFB FACTIONS**

In October 2004, following sustained counter Insurgency operations, NDFB declared a unilateral ceasefire. This was followed by a formal signing of SoO in 2005. Over the course of the next decade, there were multiple splits within NDFB, for

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a variety of reasons, ranging from the crackdowns in Bhutan and Bangladesh, intensive counter insurgency operations, and the 2008 multiple bombings in Assam.

Currently, peace talks are progressing with two factions of NDFB – NDFB Pro-Talks Faction (NDFB-PTF) and NDFB- Ranjan Daimary (NDFB-R). Another faction led by I.K. Songbijit broke away from the Ranjan Daimary group forming NDFB-IKS and continued to engage in violence. The NDFB factions engaged in peace talks with GoI have also been involved in continuing illegal activities: 46 NDFB-PTF militants were arrested between 2005 and 2012 for illegal activities and 36 weapons were recovered from these militants. No further updates with regards to SoO violations are available.

Separately, in 2008, 2012 and 2014 there was large-scale violence against Muslims in BTC areas by NDFB militants. After a massacre of the Adivasi community in 2014, NDFB-IKS (now known as the Saoraigwra faction) has been put under sustained pressure by SFs and its activities have become minimal.

TALKS WITH ADIVASI GROUPS

Five Adivasi militant groups, All Adivasi National liberation Army (AANLA), Birsa Commando Force (BCF), Adivasi Cobra Military of Assam (ACMA), Santhal Tiger Force (STF) & Adivasi People’s Army (APA), surrendered their

arms and began to negotiate with the State about the issues faced by their community. The major demand is granting them land rights and Scheduled Tribe status. These groups allege that Government did not initiate talks; and have warned that they will start an agitation for separate state if these demands are not met by 2019.

TALKS WITH MINOR HILL BASED KUKI AND HMAR MILITANT GROUPS

Various Kuki and Hmar militant groups, including the United Kukigam Defence Army (UKDA), Kuki Revolutionary Army (KRA), and Kuki Liberation Army (KLA) are also active in the twin hill Districts – Dima Hasao and Karbi Anglong. These groups purport to protect the interest of the minor tribes from their dominant counterparts (Dimasa and Karbi). Since 2012, these groups have entered into peace talks with the State Government. There has been little significant development in the talks with these groups.

Although the peace talks with militant groups have culminated in the signing of three MoSs, some of the issues that ignited the militant movements in Assam persist. As seen in the case of Mizoram, the top Bodo and Dimasa militants of Assam who have come over ground have found political rehabilitation with top positions in Autonomous Council


bodies. Former top ULFA militant Naba Kumar Sarania had won 2014 Parliamentary election from Kokrajhar Constituency of Assam as an Independent candidate. The concessions agreed upon with these militant groups increase the insecurity for other communities residing in the same region. The election of Sarania from Kokrajhar Constituency is largely due to consolidation of the support of non-Bodo people for his candidature.

No doubt, the level of violence in the State of Assam had come down dramatically in recent years, due to multiple reasons that include peace talks with the violent groups, counter insurgency operations and cooperation from neighbouring countries. But the key to achieving lasting peace in case of Assam does not lie in a single accord. There is a need to understand and address the multiple ethnic faultlines arising not only from the historical past (foreigners’ issues, land alienation) but also from recent developments such as creation of BAC and subsequently BTC, renaming N.C. Hills, ambiguous clause 6 of Assam Accord. Solutions that are not community specific could be the way ahead.

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91 Clause 6 reads: “Constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards, as may be appropriate, shall be provided to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people.”
The insurgencies in the Northeast have recorded tremendous declines, with overall fatalities falling to 74 in 2018, the lowest since 1992. The reasons for the decline...
range from divisions within the ranks of militant groups, loss of Bhutan and Bangladesh as militant sanctuaries, and progressive negotiations between the Government and many of the active extremist formations in the region. The most important development being the engagement with NSCN-IM and the Framework Agreement signed in 2015.

If the 1950’s saw the initial sparks of the Naga rebellion, the 1960’s experienced the emergence of Manipuri and Tripura insurgent outfits; the 1970’s saw the advent of Assamese the separatist movement; the 1980’s witnessed the state of Meghalaya registering the initial sparks of armed violence, even as the Kuki insurgency emerged in Manipur. The 1990’s saw the Bodo insurgency taking root in Assam. In short from the 1950’s through to the 1990’s, the region has seen the spawning of one major insurgency after another. However, there has been no major spread of insurgency into new ethnic groups or significant spread of armed movements into new geographical areas since 2000. Counterintuitively, the saturation of militancy eventually led to the current stabilisation of the security environment in the region.

The Security Forces and Government Administration have been able to gradually contain the violence throughout the North East. Between 1992-2002, the cumulative insurgency related fatalities, according to the *South Asia Terrorism Portal* (SATP) were 13,121. However, the figure decreased to 7,253 between 2003-2012 and to 1,361 between 2013-19 (until June 3, 2019). In pure numerical terms the current fatality rate is 1/10 to that incurred between 1992-2002 (Figure 6).

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With the violence declining in the Northeast, the current environment is ideal for bringing to a close the multitude of insurgencies which have plagued the region. The average civilian in Northeast has been exhausted by continuing insurgency and resulting criminality, including parallel taxation and abduction for ransom. The idea of secession has run its course, and there is no substantial demand of ‘Independence’.

A crucial reason for the demise of secessionist militancy has been the increasing move by residents of the Northeast out of the region, to metros and other parts of India resulting in the significant erosion of ‘otherness’, which was prevalent earlier. This migration and consequent engagement is only likely to grow further in the coming years.

Support from the neighbourhood: The cooperation of neighbouring countries has played a significant role in bringing the groups to the negotiating table and the resultant decline in insurgency. Since 2003, the India government has been able to convince the sovereign Governments of Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar to dismantle the camps and bases of Indian Insurgent Groups (IIGs) based in their respective territories. The dismantling of major bases in the Sagaing region in Myanmar; CHT, Moulvibazar and Sherpur Districts in Bangladesh; and Samdrup-Jongkhar and Samtse Districts in Bhutan, took place over an extended period of time. The actions of these countries have been a major factor in the decrease of violence in India’s Northeast. New Delhi has been able to bring the neighbourhood to act in an effective manner. However, since nothing is permanent in the world of international relations, there can be no certainty about the future direction of relations with neighbours and the sustainability of the current environment, which has weakened militant structures.

The government must take advantage of the flat-lining of insurgencies in the Northeast to address residual irritants, because the factors that have contributed to the current calm may not last forever.

Time bound Peace Process and Forming a consensus: The Government machinery must change its conflict management mode to a conflict resolution mode, and ensure that peace processes are executed in a time bound manner. If the peace process drags on for an extended period, the uncertainty of the end agreement persists. This entices militant groups to increase their cadre strength and arsenal. For instance, a senior official in 2017 noted that, “In 2015, when NSCN-IM signed an agreement, it had 2,000 cadres in its fold, after that they
recruited 5,000 more. The current strength is 5,000 as 2,000 deserted the ranks…”

Moreover, chances of extraneous events derailing peace processes also increase if the process drags on. For example, on January 12, 2019, ULFA-PTF had threatened to pull out of the eight-year-old peace talks if the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) was passed to become a law. There is widespread resentment among the people of Assam against the Bill. In such a situation, ULFA leader Mrinal Hazarika argues, it will be difficult to continue with the peace talks if the Centre moves ahead with the passage of the bill.

Regrettably, one of the common features of most Indian peace accords has been the absence of all the top tier insurgent leadership unitedly joining the negotiation process. While some supported talks, others opposed it. As a consensual decision was often absent, armed violence continues and insurgent groups get factionalized, further complicating the conflict scenario. On November 11, 1975, Government of India signed an agreement with a section of NNC and Naga Federal Government (NFG). However, the NNC did not prepare the grounds for signing of the accord, and important functionaries such as Thuingaleng Muivah, who was the ‘general secretary’ of NNC and Isak Swu ‘vice president’ of NNC were staying in China when the accord was signed. After the Shillong Accord,

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the NNC was completely side-lined and NSCN became the primary insurgent group of the Naga cause.

Similarly, in Assam, in case of ULFA, there were differences within the top leadership which led to the splintering of ULFA. The ‘commander in chief’ Paresh Baruah opposed the decision taken by the ‘general council’ to engage in unconditional peace talks. This resulted in a formal split in August 2012. Paresh Baruah expelled Arabinda Rajkhowa, the ‘president’ of ULFA and replaced him with Abhijit Asom. The Arabinda Rajkhowa faction is currently called the ULFA-PTF and has entered into peace talks with the government. However, the Paresh Baruah led ULFA-Independent, continues to engage in violence.

The lack of common consensus and resultant factionalism has been followed by narrower, non-inclusive and self-centered demands for peace talks by insurgent leaderships who were interested in forwarding the interests of their respective tribal or ethnic lineage. These demands, which were viewed as antithetical to the interests of other ethnic or tribal groups, resulted in factional violence and the mushrooming of minor insurgent groups as well.

This process can be seen in Nagaland, where the undivided NSCN fractured along tribal lines in 1988. A rumour had circulated that Swu and Muivah had ‘sold out’ and planned to oust Khaplang, seize arms from the Konyak cadres and surrender in India. In order to resolve the issue, a ‘national assembly’ session was called. However, while the meeting was going on, cadres loyal to Khaplang and the Myanmar Army attacked cadres loyal to Isak and Muivah, killing at least 140 Isak-Muivah loyalists, who belonged to the Tangkhul tribe. This resulted in a vertical split into the Khaplang (Hemi
and Konyak) and Muivah-Swu (Tangkhul- Sema) factions.\textsuperscript{97} Meanwhile, Angami and Chakesang tribes remained loyal to NNC. Further complicating the inter-tribal rivalry, in 2011 cadres belonging to the Zeliangrong\textsuperscript{98} tribal grouping of both NSCN-IM and NSCN-K formed the Zeliangrong United Front (ZUF) with the proclaimed objective of protecting the interests of the Zeliangrong tribes.\textsuperscript{99}

**Rehabilitation of Militants:** A robust system to help rehabilitate the militants and integrate them back into society is essential. Without proper rehabilitation, members may form their own group or form gangs of petty criminals. In one such recent incident, five surrendered NLFT militants were arrested for robbing a petrol pump at Maharani in the Gomati District in Tripura.\textsuperscript{100} An effective rehabilitation plan is essential for the insurgent violence to end, and prevent its transformation into a law and order problem. In Mizoram an effective rehabilitation policy was also rolled out to lessen the chance of formation of any splinter groups. The issue of the surrender of 750 Mizo insurgents was resolved by the formation of two camps in the Indo-Bangladesh border, at Parva (Lawngtlai District) and Marpara (Mamit District). After surrendering their arms and ammunition in the camps, the rebels went to the rehabilitation centre at Luangmual on the outskirts of Aizawl.\textsuperscript{101}

\textsuperscript{98} Zeliangrong tribe is composed of ‘Zemas’, ‘Liangmeis’ and ‘Rongmeis’.
Over 100 surrendered militants were absorbed into the India Reserve Battalion (IRBN), about 70 in the Mizoram Armed Police and about another 100 in the State Government. The importance of rehabilitation was further stressed by a Parliamentary Panel on Home Affairs. The panel prepared a generous rehabilitation and settlement scheme for militants of NSCN-IM, which signed a Frame Work Agreement with the government in 2015. The panel report stated:

The committee, keeping in view the historical dynamics of insurgency, wishes to remind the Government that the most important aspect of any agreement with insurgents is the adequate rehabilitation and settlement program for the cadres of the insurgent outfits. NSCN-IM, being the largest group in the entire region, would have thousands of cadres who must be adequately settled to make the agreement successful and to prevent the emergence of any splinter groups.

Although 39 armed groups have signed SoOs with the Government, for varied periods of time, the resultant peace process has been cumbersome and time consuming and no final agreement has been signed to cement an enduring settlement so far.

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Pakistan

Democratic Forces and the Deep State

Musa Khan Jalalzai*

Pakistan is wobbling on the brink. The scimitar of jihadist ideology of the country’s military establishment is trying its level best to destabilise the neighbouring countries of India and Afghanistan. The Army and intelligence agencies lack a clear and long-term national security approach. The country’s domestic policy is in dire straits. Every month, the Corps Commanders’ Conference ends with castigation and slander.1 The spectrum of rogue and radicalised elements range from military officers to employees of the Strategic Planning Division and officers of the nuclear force. The patience of Baloch and Pashtun leaders to tolerate the search and stop policy of armed forces and the abduction of their children, women and tribal elders by intelligence agencies on a regular basis, has now dematerialised. The populace of these areas is also suffering from starvation and various diseases.2

* The author is a Foreign and Strategic Affairs analyst.
2 Musa Khan Jalalzai, Pakistan: Living with a Nuclear Monkey, Vij Books, Delhi, 2018, pp. 1, 2 and 3.
Musa Khan Jalalzai

Broken-down ethnically, the garrison state is now tottering under the heavy burden of debt and poverty.\(^3\) Prime Minister Imran Khan with his porringer in hand has been cruising across Asia, beseeching financial help to pay for the interest on debts since 2018. The whole financial system of the country is out of element to overcome this crisis.\(^4\) The Prime Minister supplicated the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a bailout package to treat the wounds of his teetering-tottering state. By the end of June 2018, Pakistan had a current account deficit of USD 18 billion, nearly a 45 per cent increase from an account deficit of USD 12.4 billion in 2017.\(^5\)

At the same time, Balochistan, Sindh, and Waziristan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), are in turmoil. The Islamic State (IS/Daesh), Taliban and Jihadists have returned to the region and continue to target civilians and military installations. The nexus of Mullah and miltablishment is making the situation even worse. The deep state\(^6\) is expanding its sphere of influence to all state institutions to gradually undermine democracy, and enrich its private criminal enterprise.\(^7\)

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3 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 As stated by Michael Crowley in “The Deep State is Real”, Politico Magazine, September/October, 2017, “Political scientists and foreign policy experts have used the term deep state for years to describe individuals and institutions who exercise power independent of—and sometimes over—civilian political leaders. They applied it mainly to developing countries like Algeria, Pakistan, Egypt and Turkey, where generals and spies called the real shots in nominally democratic societies and replaced elected leaders when they saw fit. (Turkey and Egypt have recently moved to more overt security-state dictatorships, in which the deep state is the only state)”.
7 Musa Khan Jalalzai, 2018, op. cit., p. 5.
Democratic Forces and the Deep State

The nexus of jihadists, wealthy individuals and serving and retired bureaucrats, as well as opportunistic politicians, has lent its support to the invisible forces of disorder so that the deep state is able to preserve and continue a lucrative business enterprise.\textsuperscript{8}

Pakistani intelligence agencies are undergoing a deep crisis of confidence, professional credibility and national security management. A contest of strength between the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the Intelligence Bureau (IB), and a misplaced sense of patriotism\textsuperscript{9}; poor, politicised and sectarian organisational management; and an inefficient approach to national security, threaten the territorial integrity of this staggering state.\textsuperscript{10} The uninterrupted militarisation of the public mind and thought, and the enfeebled operational mechanism of civilian intelligence in the country has resulted in a popular mindset where every movement, action and way of thinking of Pakistan’s political leadership as well as the common people have become militarised, and accordingly seeks a military solution for every major or minor issue.\textsuperscript{11}

Expanding the spectrum of their illegal business of torture and forced-disappearance to cover major foreign and domestic policy areas, the agencies have assumed a more

\textsuperscript{8} Imad Zafar, “The corrosive influence of Pakistan’s ‘deep state’”, \textit{Asia Times}, March 28, 2018, \url{https://www.asiatimes.com/2018/03/opinion/red-line-needs-redefined-power-corridors/}.

\textsuperscript{9} Hassan Abbas, “Reform of Pakistan’s Intelligence Services”, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, March 15, 2008, \url{https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/reform-pakistans-intelligence-services}.


controversial position than ever before. Normally, the prime task of intelligence agencies is to lead policy makers in the right direction, based on detailed and reality-based intelligence, but the case in Pakistan is different.\(^{12}\) The agencies mislead the political leadership and policy makers, driving them into the wrong direction, and making alliances with radicalised elements in support of the miltablishment’s business of forced disappearances and torture.\(^ {13}\) In all previous democratic governments of the country, even ministers of Cabinet rank never dared to question the secret agencies about their illegal prisons, and kidnapping for ransom.\(^ {14}\)

Nevertheless, civilian and military intelligence agencies in Pakistan face numerous challenges, including widespread lack of civilian support, faith in themselves, sectarian and political affiliations, as well as the war in Waziristan and Balochistan, where the circle of intelligence information collection has contracted drastically.\(^ {15}\)

**How The Intelligence Agencies Morphed**

Over the last two decades, the role and scale of Pakistan’s intelligence agencies has grown over and above their prescribed functions, to the degree that their operations, often undercover and at odds even with each other, have earned them the repute of being a “State within a State”.\(^ {16}\) In most parts of the country, intelligence information collection faces numerous difficulties since the Taliban and other militant groups control important

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12 Hassan Abbas, op. cit.
13 Musa Khan Jalalzia, “Pakistan: Reorganization of Intelligence infrastructure”, op. cit.
strategic locations. Having faced serious difficulties in dealing with insurgent forces in Balochistan and Waziristan, the agencies started translating their anger into the killing and kidnapping of innocent civilians with impunity.

The real journey of the ISI and IB began in the 1980s, when they tightened their belts to challenge the Soviet KGB (Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti) and other European intelligence networks in Afghanistan.\(^\text{17}\) They learned intelligence operations in war zones, and tried to professionalise their rank and file. However, General Zia-ul-Haq’s sectarian policies destroyed their hopes. The intelligence infrastructure, instead, became deeply radicalised, ethnicised and sectarianised, and its members started physically participating in the Afghan *jihad*. During Zia’s military regime, the process of radicalization took root in military barracks and in the intelligence infrastructure. A major change occurred when Zia instructed military and intelligence units to take combatant mullahs with them to the frontline. Soldiers and officers were also required to attend Tablighi Jamaat classes. The purpose was to indoctrinate young officers.\(^\text{18}\) All military, civilian and policing agencies participated regularly in Tablighi congregations to ‘purify’ their soul for the Afghan and Kashmir *jihad*.

As the Afghan War came to an end and the jihadists returned to Pakistan, a new wave of terrorism and radicalisation challenged the authority of the state. The ISI never sought to restrain their violent actions against civilian and military installations in Afghanistan. Even within Pakistan, the ISI’s intransigence, remorselessness and refusal to cooperate with civilian intelligence agencies on national security issues,

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\(^{17}\) Musa Khan Jalalzai, 2018, op. cit. p. 162.

\(^{18}\) Musa Khan Jalalzia, “Pakistan: Reorganization of Intelligence infrastructure”, op. cit.
often prompted internal tugs-of-war. The ISI never extended a hand of cooperation to civilian intelligence agencies, or even considered IB as an older civilian brother, over the past four decades. The unending resultant tussle forced former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to restructure the IB and make it more effective to counter ISI’s influence in political institutions. The Prime Minister allocated huge funds to the IB to recruit and employ more agents to meet the country’s internal and external challenges.\textsuperscript{19} The greatest challenge Nawaz Sharif faced was on the national security front. The miltablishment was not happy with his national security approach.\textsuperscript{20}

The Intelligence Bureau is the country’s main civilian intelligence agency, and functions under the direct control of the Prime Minister, tackling terrorism, insurgency and extremism. The way military intelligence has operated over the past decades is not a traditional or cultural pattern. Instead of tackling national security challenges, the ISI, along with Military Intelligence (MI) and other units, have mostly concentrated on countering democratic forces within the country.\textsuperscript{21} When the intelligence war among military and civilian agencies intensified, the blame-game became the main focus of literary debates in newspapers and electronic media, and the theme adopted was that these jihadists were making things worse. Democratic forces stood behind civilian intelligence agencies, while pro-establishment agencies supported the ISI and its undemocratic business.

A secret war goes on between the ISI, IB and MI. It is known that the officials from the military’s ISI agency had

\begin{itemize}
\item 20 Musa Khan Jalalzai, “Pakistan: Reorganization of Intelligence infrastructure”, op. cit.
\item 21 Musa Khan Jalalzai, 2018, op. cit. p. 174.
\end{itemize}
their phone calls eavesdropped at the height of civil-military tension in 2014, following an attempt on the life of the *Geo TV* anchor Hamid Mir, who said he suspected ISI involvement. The rivalry between the IB and ISI boiled over in June 2017 when a Joint Investigation Team (JIT) probing alleged money-laundering by the Sharif family made a written complaint to the Supreme Court that the IB was wiretapping JIT members, including ISI and military intelligence personnel. The JIT further reported that the IB was hampering its inquiries, adding that military-led intelligence agencies were not on “good terms” with the IB. It said that IB had collected intelligence on members of the JIT from the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) and presented it to Nawaz Sharif for use against them. In the present situation, it is not clear what roles are being allocated to the three major agencies. The crucial question that still needs to be addressed is whether these agencies function under the watchful eyes of an elected government, or are they still so sturdy that they are themselves instrumental in installing or toppling such governments.

A QUESTION OF CREDIBILITY

All civilian and military agencies have a specific mindset. Their sectarian affiliation and dearth of electronically trained manpower, lack of professional surveillance approach, and the absence of a proper intelligence sharing culture raised serious questions about their credibility, and seed a weak national security approach. These and other things also caused the failure of the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA)

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23 Abbas Nasir, “Pakistan’s Intelligence Agencies: The Inside Story”, op. cit.
24 Hassan Abbas, op. cit.

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to effectively counter the exponential growth of radicalisation and extremism within Pakistan.  

Military and civilian intelligence agencies did not cooperate with NACTA in its war against radicalised forces. As a matter of fact, NACTA established a Joint Intelligence Directorate (JID) with officers from ISI, MI, IB, and Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs). The JID’s goal was to manage and pool effective intelligence works undertaken by both civilian and military intelligence agencies of the country, and to increase intelligence sharing with Police Departments, Provincial and Federal LEAs. The JID was to help the democratic government in dealing with extremism and Talibanisation in four provinces, but the government didn’t pay long-term attention, nor did it receive sufficient financial support. The military establishment, moreover, failed to help train its operational managers.

Under the NACTA Act, the agency was entrusted to the Board of Governors (BOG). The Prime Minister was the Chairman, and its members included defense, finance, foreign and law ministers, members of the Senate and National Assembly, Chief Ministers of the four provinces, the Prime Minister of Kashmir, the Interior Secretary, Director General of Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), all chiefs of intelligence agencies, and chiefs of Police department from all provinces. On September 25, 2018, Prime Minister Imran Khan chaired the first meeting of the BOG. Expressing dissatisfaction over the NACTA’s performance, he ordered the establishment of a special committee to oversee its performance and make it competent.

In 2017, the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif tried to take control of foreign and internal policy of the country, but was disqualified from his post by the Supreme Court. He sought to lead Pakistan’s India and Afghan policy in the right direction; but was intercepted, humiliated, and his movements were salami-sliced.\(^{27}\) When former President Asif Ali Zardari tried to bring the ISI under democratic control, he faced the same fate. He was pushed around and his crippled and tortured body would be shifted to hospital in an army ambulance. The continuous militarisation and Talibanisation of society, and instability led to the catastrophe of disintegration and failure of the state, which was further inflamed by the US war on terrorism, and involvement of NATO forces in Afghanistan.\(^{28}\) Pakistan’s weak and unprofessional diplomatic approach towards Afghanistan prompted a deep crisis, including the closure of trade routes and a diplomatic impasse.\(^{29}\)

One can easily focus on the Army’s political and bureaucratic role in state institutions. According to the Constitution of Pakistan, every democratic government is answerable to the people of Pakistan. But in reality, they are actually answerable to the Army headquarters in Rawalpindi. Every single Prime Minister in Pakistan can only do his or her job smoothly if they completely surrender defense, interior, strategic decisions and foreign policy to the Army. It means the rules for civilian governments are pre-decided and they have been told to go by the book and not cross the red-lines defined by the defense establishment. This makes it a “State within a State” that, instead of ruling the country from the front, prefers


\(^{28}\) Musa Khan Jalalzai, 2018, op. cit., p. 133.

\(^{29}\) Ibid.
that the politicians and civilian governments implement its decision and exercise power.\textsuperscript{30}

To punish Afghanistan’s National Army, Pakistan’s intelligence agencies provided sophisticated weapons to the Taliban and other extremist organisations to make the war in Afghanistan disastrous and unfavorable to Kabul since 2001. Pakistan’s military establishment continues to train, arm, and transport terrorist groups inside Afghanistan to target civilian and military installations, and make the lives of civilians, including women and children, hell. The ISI has often been accused by the Afghan Army and Government of playing a role in major terrorist attacks. Pakistan has long been a vigorously troublesome state for Afghanistan, struggling to limit India’s political influence there, and working to organise radical elements to create a war-like situation in Kashmir as well.\textsuperscript{31}

\textbf{The Cost Of War}

The war in Afghanistan has brought instability, hate, disparity and destruction due to regional rivalries. Peace is a distant dream in Afghanistan. Robert Kaplan warned that if the Taliban control Afghanistan again, radicalisation will get strong and Pakistan’s sphere of influence will expand from India’s border all the way to Central Asia. An Afghanistan that falls to the Taliban sway threatens to create a succession of radicalised Islamic societies from the Indo-Pak border to Central Asia. This would be, in effect, a greater Pakistan,


giving Pakistan’s ISI the capability to create a clandestine empire composed of the likes of the Haqqani Network and the Lashkar-e-Taiba.\textsuperscript{32}

Moreover, Afghans understand that the Pakistan Army pursued its own agenda in Afghanistan by providing funds and sanctuaries to Taliban on Pakistani soil. Its support to the Haqqani Network, and the IS/Daesh has prolonged the catastrophic Afghan war. These and other concerns have created great diplomatic and foreign policy challenges for Islamabad. Today, the country’s leadership feels isolated, and no one is willing to dance to its beat. These and other afflictions and suffering have forced the civilian leadership to attempt to reconceptualise foreign policy. On February 28, 2018, \textit{Dawn} reported the country’s National Security Committee (NSC) decision to recalibrate foreign policy to make it more effective and regionally focused.\textsuperscript{33} Pakistan’s nuclear black marketing across the globe also caused much embarrassment.\textsuperscript{34} The Army is behind the disruptive sectarian forces within the country, and provides clandestine support to sectarian religious groups in Pakistan as an instrument to undermine democratic governments.

Over the past three decades, Pakistan’s military establishment has stoutly denied supporting violent religious groups regardless of whether a group’s targets lay across national borders or, instead, its aim was to attain specific political objectives within Pakistan. But today the military’s

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\item \textsuperscript{34} Musa Khan Jalalzai, 2018, op. cit., p. 4.
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attitude is more ambivalent. Both serving and retired senior Army officers are now openly expressing support for some groups. These include the religious parties opposed to the Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PML-N), notably Hafiz Saeed’s Milli Muslim League (MML) and Khadim Hussain Rizvi’s Tehreek Labbaik Ya Rasool Allah (TLYRA). Religious groups have already made their debut on the national scene and experienced initial successes in the NA-120 by-elections.\(^{35}\) In a video that went viral, the serving Director General of the Pakistan Rangers, Punjab, Major-General Azhar Naveed Hayat Khan, can be seen handing out coupons of Rs1,000 to TLYRA demonstrators while assuring them support, stating, “kya hum bhi aap kay saath nahin hain?” (Are we not with you?).

On December 25, 2017, former Afghan Minister of Interior, Wais Ahmad Barmak warned that Daesh in Afghanistan receive support from Pakistan and that a majority of the fighters belong to Afridi and Orakzai tribes based in Pakistan.\(^{36}\)

Pakistan’s establishment and its secret agencies have been using jihadists in Afghanistan to achieve their strategic goal. Pakistan backed Taliban are fighting to control natural resources and sites in different provinces of Afghanistan. It was reported in May 2019 that illegal mining of gold and other precious minerals has dramatically increased in Taliban-controlled regions close to the border with Pakistan. One of the tribal leaders of Helmand Province, Najibullah Baloch who was the former District Governor of Khanishin, disclosed that, once excavated, the raw materials are smuggled into Pakistan,


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where they are processed.\textsuperscript{37} The Pakistan Army has already constructed a road from Chitral to the Badakhshan Province of Afghanistan to allow easy access to natural resources’ extraction sites.

Furthermore, the military-madrasa-mullah nexus has deliberately manipulated and encouraged jihadism by favouring a tactical deployment of jihadi groups in Kashmir and Afghanistan to expand Pakistan’s regional influence. The internal conditions within Pakistan have also deteriorated over the past decades because of the focus on building up militancy and grooming Islamist extremist groups as weapons, in Rawalpindi’s eternal and obsessive struggle against India. The military-militant cabal is the core problem of Pakistan today. The Abbottabad raid and the Mehran Naval Base attack were strong enough pointers in this direction. These two incidents were symptomatic of a larger malaise that has been eroding the army’s professionalism for quite some time.\textsuperscript{38}

Pakistan’s support to the Taliban is due to two reasons: to establish its political and military influence in Afghanistan, and push India back to the borderlines of South Asia. Pakistan believes that India supports militants in Balochistan, and its ‘Good Taliban’ are those who fight against Afghanistan and India, while it’s ‘Bad Taliban’ are those who fight against its own Army. On November 27, 2013, the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif appointed General Raheel Sharif as Chief of the Pakistan Army, but Sharif later resisted his government’s


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pressure to introduce security and intelligence sector reforms.\textsuperscript{39} This change of face ensured that any action against the Taliban would be ineffective, even as General Sharif’s mission of killing Pashtuns in Waziristan failed to eradicate domestic militancy.

Moreover, a large number of General Sharif’s Army officers and soldiers refused to fight against the civilian population. The Army Chief declined to negotiate with tribal leaders, and refused to respect Parliament and democratic norms. Instead, he designed the policy of shoot to kill in Waziristan, causing death of large numbers of innocent civilians, including women and children, with impunity, and the kidnapping of tribal elders.\textsuperscript{40}

The Army has failed to develop a true ethnic representation process or to motivate Baloch and Sindhis to join the ranks of the armed forces. However, a great deal of experience in the killing of innocent civilians has been amassed. In Balochistan, thousands of Baloch men and women disappeared in so-called military operations over the last 15 years, while the tortured and mutilated bodies of thousands of missing persons turn up on roadsides.

The ‘integration of terror’ into the military concept of war and strategy and the involvement of civilians in a total religious war naturally led to the idea of non-state players who could be acting in connection with the military as part of their pre-operational preparation, including striking ‘terror in the heart of the enemy’. The launching of various civilian militant groups during Zia-ul-Haq’s time can be traced to the evolution of this military doctrine. Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan


\textsuperscript{40} Musa Khan Jalalzai, 2017, op. cit.
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(SSP) and its militant wing the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) were floated to quell Shia and Christian opposition to pro-Sunni Islamisation measures and the promulgation of the Blasphemy Law, respectively.

**WAR IN THE AFGHAN BACKYARD**

The miltablishment and the ISI view the Afghan Taliban as the ‘Good Taliban’, and support the latter’s fight in Afghanistan as a welcome development. Regarding the issue of Good and Bad Taliban, the Pakistan Army views all such Afghan groups, including the Quetta Shura located in Quetta, Balochistan, and the Haqqani Network, located in Waziristan, as ‘strategic assets’. The Afghan Taliban is supported by the ISI to maintain influence over Afghanistan, particularly in a scenario after the American drawdown of Forces from the area, as many in Pakistan’s military establishment continue to think of the Afghan landmass as Pakistan’s backyard and an area which will offer them ‘strategic depth’ in the event of hostilities with India. Pakistan has also encouraged and promoted terrorist organisations such as the LeT, JeM, and HuM which it views as strategic assets to be used against India. These terrorist groups have been waging a proxy war against India over the past three decades in Kashmir at very little cost to Pakistan – a policy of bleeding India with a thousand cuts, but keeping the conflict below perceived levels of India’s threshold of response.\(^4\)

General Raheel ordered armed forces into Waziristan to suppress domestic terrorism by the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), and shifted Afghan Taliban commanders to safe houses elsewhere. The challenge to Pakistan’s sovereignty in Swat and Buner was addressed with brute force only after the

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Taliban were ensconced in newer safe havens. The insurgency in South Waziristan was tackled on a war footing after years of procrastination, but the writ of TTP still runs in Waziristan.

The issue of ethnic representation within the armed forces has also raised serious concerns. Some experts argue that Pakistan’s army is not a national army and view it as the club of Punjabi generals.42

Pakistan’s foreign policy objectives include ‘liberating’ Kashmir and engaging the Indian Army in a long and an unending war, and terrorist proxies such as LeT have been created and are supported to this end. However, the formation of LeT also has an Afghan angle. LeT was established in the Kunar Province of Afghanistan as the military wing of the Pakistan-based Islamist fundamentalist movement Markaz al-Dawa wal Irshad. The LeT maintained several charities such as Falah-e-Insaniyat Foundation; Idara Khidmat-e-Khalq; Jamaat al-Dawa; Jamaat-i-Dawat; Jamaat Daawa, Paasban-e-Ahle-Hadis, and Milli Muslim League.

The international community first began taking notice of LeT after its coordinated attacks in Mumbai, India, in November 2008. However, the group was established far back in 1987, at a time when Pakistan was involved in the anti-Soviet campaign in Afghanistan. Over time, the group developed deep and enduring linkages with other Pakistani state proxies operating in Afghanistan, including the Taliban and al Qaeda. LeT had access to a steady supply of volunteers, funding, and – most important of all – sustained state support. Long bolstered by Pakistan’s ISI Directorate, this Wahhabi group promoted the vision of a universal Islamic Caliphate through Tabligh

42 Musa Khan Jalalzai, 2015, op. cit., p. 111.
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(preaching) and Jihad (armed struggle).\(^4^3\) Once the Taliban had established its dominance in Afghanistan, LeT was redirected to wage jihad in Indian Kashmir. LeT follows Salafi version of Islam. This extremist organisation receives military training from the Pakistan Army.

Terrorist organisations including al Qaeda, LeT, Taliban, a range of Arab extremists and Takfiri jihadists in Pakistan and Afghanistan pose a threat to regional and world security. They train suicide bombers across Asia and the Middle East. Religious and political vendettas are settled by using suicide bombers against rival groups or families in Pakistan. A generation of fear is controlled by extremist elements and non-state actors in Waziristan, Kabul and Quetta.

Terrorists are trained by Pakistan to further its foreign policy agendas in India and Afghanistan. But some of these groups, or factions within them, have turned their weapons on the Pakistan armed forces. The controversial but faith-based connection between the Pakistan Army and the militants has weakened as a result of the kill and dump policy of the rogue army in the Waziristan region of erstwhile FATA.

**The Danger Within**

Despite the Pakistani state’s denial, there have been clear pointers to the existence of sympathisers and collaborators of Islamist radical organisations within all three-armed forces of Pakistan. Every major attack on a military installation in the country bears clear marks of collusion by elements from within. Many Pakistan Air Force (PAF) and army personnel, including six officers, were convicted for attempts on the life of General Pervez Musharraf in December 2003, when he was the country’s President. On August 20, 2005, an Army

\(^{43}\) Ibid.
soldier, Abdul Islam Siddiqui, was hanged after an in-camera Court Martial, for triggering an explosion to target Musharraf in Rawalpindi. On another occasion, an anti-aircraft gun was discovered on the flight path of General Musharraf’s plane, when he was taking off from Rawalpindi Air base on a pitch-dark night. In 2010, two former Army officers and two serving officers, including a colonel, were convicted by court martial for planning an attack on the Shamsi airbase, which is used by the Americans to fly their drones. Two serving Army officers have also been court martialled for links with Hizb-ut-Tahrir.44

Terrorists have also attacked Pakistan’s nuclear installations. In 2007, two air force facilities in Sargodha, housing deliverable nuclear weapons were attacked. On 21 August, 2008, terrorists attacked the Ordnance Factories in Wah in Punjab Province, Pakistan’s principal nuclear weapons’ assembly unit. In July 2009, a suicide bomber struck a bus that may have been carrying A.Q. Khan Research Laboratory scientists, injuring 30 people. Further, two attacks by Baloch militants on suspected Atomic Energy Commission facilities in Dera Ghazi Khan have also drawn international attention to the security of the country’s nuclear installations. In June 2014, two suicide bombers killed high ranking military officers linked to Pakistan’s nuclear programme in Fateh Jang. Moreover, on October 10, 2009, nine terrorists, dressed in army uniforms, attacked the Army’s General Headquarters (GHQ) at Rawalpindi, which also houses the Army Strategic Forces Command, the nerve centre of the country’s nuclear weapons command and control.

Pakistan has all the signs and symptoms of an ailing state that may not be able to sustain itself at the current rate of deterioration. People, an important constituent of the elements that defines a State, are fast losing faith in their institutions. Democratically elected governments have been accused of shameless inability and inefficiency in handling the tottering state, particularly over the past four decades. Pakistan is, moreover, at war with itself. This partial civil war has been caused by the misadventures of many state agencies, as well as of many internal and external forces. All these forces are working on divergent agendas, with little care about the future of the Pakistani people and the implications of these deadly agendas for South Asia and the rest of the world.

Among internal forces, religious parties endorse and encourage extremism, *jihad*, and intolerance, and relentlessly prepare Muslim youth for *Ghalba-e-Islam* (the global dominance of Islam). This task is being executed in an estimated 2.1 million religious seminaries spread all over Pakistan.\(^4\) Originally the religious parties were providing *jihad* training to youth in collaboration with those who were providing training to the Mujahideen in the anti-Soviet campaign in Afghanistan, campaigns that subsequently expanded to include Indian Kashmir. All this was being done with funding and weaponry from CIA, through the ISI. The Mujahideen, created by the CIA and ISI, are now fighting against Americans in Afghanistan, against India in Kashmir, and against the Pakistan army in Swat, Waziristan and other tribal areas of Pakistan.\(^5\)

The poverty-stricken and economically failing Pakistani state has become a headache for its neighbours. Pakistan needs

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5. Ibid.
to specify its direction of either joining the path of Singapore and Malaysia, or joining the club of failed states. The country is now facing unprecedented challenges. Economically crumbling, with a dysfunctional political system, corrupt political elite, unemployed youth, extremism – both religious and now ethnic – and the only Muslim country to have nukes... the list of problems feeding a rising chaos goes on.

Pakistan lacks a coherent, long-term view on issues, and this is reflected in its poor diplomatic efforts. Governments come and go, but the challenges confronting the nation persist, indeed, escalate, demanding periodic re-assessment based on emerging situations. The war in neighbouring Afghanistan is weakening Pakistan as a modern state. The longer the war in Afghanistan continues the more it will complicate the situation in Pakistan.47

The most disturbing aspect of all is the lack of capacity of the current system to cope with these challenges. Even worse is the agony of realising that the contemporary system is beyond repair. It is so rotten that any fix will take decades. The country is already on the edge, and one may not need to wait for decades to experience a gloomy future. The choice for Pakistan is clear: does it want to be a progressive country, or fall into the debris of violence and destruction, like Syria, Iraq, and Libya.48

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48 Jan Muhammad Achakzai, 2018, op. cit.
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Is India ready to deal with Hybrid War?

Prakash Panneerselvam*

The beginning of the 21st century has seen a crucial paradigm shift in the nature of conflict. Sub-conventional patterns, including intra-state conflict and international terrorism have replaced traditional inter-state armed conflict as the primary security challenge of nation states.

While inter-state conflicts have declined in recent times, there has been a remarkable rise in intra-state and other sub-conventional conflicts, which include sabotage, subversive confrontation and armed violence.¹ Cyber space adds yet another dimension to both conventional and sub-conventional wars.

This has led to the emergence of the concept of hybrid warfare, a phrase coined by former US Army Chief George W. Casey, who said future wars would entail “prevailing in protracted counterinsurgency campaigns; engage to help other nations build capacity and assure friends and allies; support

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* Assistant Professor, National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), Bengaluru.

Prakash Panneerselvam

civil authorities at home and abroad; [and] deter and defeat hybrid threats and hostile state actors.” 2 Hybrid warfare involves threats to a nation’s political, military, economic, social, informational and infrastructural vulnerabilities. It usually involves non-state actors indulging in subversive roles supported by states in order to give the latter some plausible deniability. Hybrid warfare exploits the ambiguity of the fog of war to remain below obvious detection and response thresholds. 3

The politico-economic fallout of such a war includes demographic and social tensions, leading to serious internal security and governance issues. With cities emerging as the nerve-centres of economic growth, it is crucial to enhance security of major Indian metropolis. In recent times, armed conflicts are increasingly taking place in urban spaces. The nation’s armed forces, principally oriented to counter external threats in open spaces, are ill-trained and equipped to fight in crowded urban areas with large civilian populations. But this is likely to change given the rising threat of hybrid conflict, which includes threats ranging from new forms of terrorism like ‘lone wolf’ attacks to cyber-terrorism and the use of armed force in urban settings is likely to increase. Security experts conceptualise anything disturbing urban settings violently as the ‘new terrorism’.

According to National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Response to Terrorism, although terrorist attacks took place in 100 countries in 2017, there was significant geographical concentration geographically. 59 per cent of all

2 Timothy McCulloh and Richard Johnson, Hybrid Warfare, Joint Special Operations University, Tampa, 2013, p.4.
attacks took place in five countries (Afghanistan, India, Iraq, Pakistan, and the Philippines), and 70 per cent of all deaths due to terrorist attacks took place in five countries (Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia, and Syria).4

Recent terrorist strikes targeting major cities across the world have added to the nightmares of policy makers, many already grappling with increasing violence in urban areas, including violent mobs rampaging through city streets, arson, assaults and assassinations, bombs and barricades, gang wars, killings and kidnappings.5

Since it appears quite inevitable that the armed forces will be increasingly called upon to operate amidst areas with large civilian populations, the forces should understand the urban environment not merely against the backdrop of conflict, “but as a dynamic relationship with the force operating within it – local population, soldiers, guerrilla fighters, journalists, photographers and humanitarian agents.”6 Their overwhelming objective will be to disarm the potential threat without harming civilians or suffering unacceptable losses due to this restriction. Both civilian and soldier’s lives are equally compromised by the emerging threats around the cities and town in coming decades. This essay offers a three-pronged approach to understand the new threat and suggest ways to minimise civilian casualties during such hybrid conflicts in urban areas.


Further, as Dexter Filkins notes, “Apart from the increased effectiveness and lethality of non-state actors within hybrid war, the symbiotic relationship between sponsor and client is another variable that differentiates hybrid war from traditional forms of conflict.” The Syrian Civil War and spread of Islamic State (IS)/Daesh presented examples of the complex strategic challenge to the world posed by modern hybrid warfare.

Hybrid war that simultaneously combines conventional, irregular, and terrorist components is a complex challenge which can only be tackled by an adaptable and versatile military. As aptly stated by Carl von Clausewitz, “Every age has its own kind of war, its own limiting conditions, and its own peculiar preconceptions.” The United States has increasingly focused on a counterinsurgency doctrine in the wake of its wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

**HYBRID WARFARE IN URBAN ENVIRONMENTS**

Hybrid warfare in the urban-environment is seeing a revised form of combat techniques integrated into battle tactics to attack a strong enemy. Urban Warfare is generally defined as “Combat conducted in urban areas such as towns and cities.” But different nations define it differently. According to US Army’s “An Infantryman’s Guide to Combat in Built-Up Area” Military Operation in Urban Terrain (MOUT) is defined as:

“All military actions that are planned and conducted on terrain where man-made construction affects the tactical options available to the commander. These

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operations are conducted to defeat an enemy that may be mixed in with civilians. Therefore, the rules of engagement (ROE) and use of combat power are more restrictive than in other conditions of combat.”

The Indian Army, part of many urban operations ranging from low-intensity conflict to counter-insurgency and guerrilla warfare, doesn’t have a formal doctrine per se for Urban Operations. However, Professor C. Christine Fair of Georgetown University provides evidence to show that that India is adopting the US doctrine of MOUT to address this gap. Even though India is yet to develop a formal doctrine, it has acquired and developed competency equivalent to the MOUT doctrine. In formulating such a doctrine, the historical context and relevance plays a crucial role in developing and preparing soldiers for future urban-warfare.

According to available literature, the concept of Urban-Warfare started to evolve in the minds of military planners since the Second World War. The Battle of Stalingrad is a viable example to start with, in which the powerful German army was outlasted by the Soviet defenders. The Commander of the Soviet Army, Vasily Ivanovich Chuikov, played a crucial role in that battle. Realising the German Army’s inefficiency in Urban-Warfare, Chuikov developed an important tactic called “hugging the enemy”, by which he directed the Soviet Army to manoeuvre closely with German forces to avoid their superior artillery and airpower. He also employed effective psychological tactics, using snipers to terrorise German soldiers. The lack of popular support and underestimating resistance in the city prolonged the confrontation, and the German army lost the


Battle of Stalingrad because it employed conventional military tactics and underestimated the effectiveness of guerrilla tactics in an urban-environment. This was a major triumph for allied forces in the Battle of Stalingrad, and subsequently, the Battle for Berlin. From then on, military history has been dominated by urban military tactics.

The Cold War environment again overturned the argument of conventional military superiority, deterring adversaries from direct attacks. Instead, war broke out in an asymmetric manner and was often fought in the vicinity of urban spaces. The Korean War (1950-1953), Vietnam War (1995-1975), Lebanon (1982 and 2006), military operation in Beirut (1982-1984) and the operations in Kosovo, Iraq, Syria, Philippines and Afghanistan are all principally sub-conventional warfare against the enemy, with a substantial proportion of operations concentrated in the urban terrain. In all these major conflicts, the US was greatly involved in fighting against adversaries in far-away cities. The US strategic community believes that this trend is likely to continue in future and that the military must be ready to conduct such operations.\textsuperscript{11}

Military planner and theorists have pointed out that “the beginning of the 21st century was marked by proliferation of hybrid wars between flexible and sophisticated adversaries engaged in asymmetric conflicts, using various forms of warfare according to the purpose and time chosen.”\textsuperscript{12} This new kind of war has not only questioned the traditional and conventional military thinking but, also generated lots of

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debate in the strategic community over the definition of the “hybrid war” and also demands new appropriate measures to adapt to the new reality imposed by it.\textsuperscript{13}

In the case of India, border disputes with its neighbours have dominated strategic affairs and policy thinking for the past 70 years. However, India also has reasonable experience in Urban-Combat. The insurgencies in Punjab and Kashmir, the Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF) mission to Sri Lanka (1987-1990) and various counter-insurgency operations have enhanced Indian military might to face emerging challenges. Due to political sensitivities, the role of the Indian military is limited, and Indian Paramilitary Forces under the Ministry of Home Affairs take control of disturbed areas. But apart from the Indian Army’s counterinsurgency doctrine, there is no official literature available in the public domain to understand the Indian armed forces’ policy towards sub-conventional and urban-warfare.

Meanwhile, belligerent elements are increasingly and effectively exploiting the hybrid war paradigm in different shapes and forms. The rising number of terrorists, insurgents and guerrilla forces targeting India and its cities over the past 70 years poses a clear and present danger. The Britain Multinational Capability Development Campaign (MCDC) Countering Hybrid Warfare project has five major reasons for the rise of hybrid warfare.\textsuperscript{14}

First, hybrid warfare uses a wider set of military, political, economic, civilian and informational instruments which are usually overlooked in traditional threat assessments.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibíd.
Second, it targets vulnerabilities across societies in ways that we do not usually think about.

Third, it synchronises attacks in novel ways. For example, by only looking at the different instruments of power an adversary possesses, one cannot necessarily predict how and to what degree they might be synchronised to create certain effects. Thus, the functional capabilities of a hybrid warfare adversary, although important, will not necessarily provide the right information to understand the problem.

Fourth, hybrid warfare intentionally exploits ambiguity, creativity, and our understanding of war to make attacks less ‘visible’. This is due to the fact that they can be tailored to stay below certain detection and response thresholds, including international legal thresholds, thus hampering the decision-making process and making it harder to react to such attacks.

Fifth, a hybrid warfare campaign may not be discovered until it is already well underway, with damaging effects having already begun manifesting themselves and degrading a target’s capability to defend itself.\textsuperscript{15} The September 11 attack on the US, followed by Indian Parliament attack on December 13, 2001, the July 7, 2005, London subway bombing, the infamous 2008 attack on Mumbai and the series of ‘Lone Wolf’ attacks in Europe in the last few years targeting civilians clearly signify the change in tactics and urban settings emerging as a choice of target. In future, non-state actors such as Al Qaeda and the Islamic State/Daesh may seek urban spaces a viable option to launch attacks, particularly to seek media attention.

With the improvement in technology and terrorist organisations simultaneously enabling small groups to inflict harm on much larger populations, “the weapon of terrorism

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
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thus severely limited the safe harbour advantage enjoyed by the cities, in time of traditional warfare.”

Therefore, from prolonged war to limited war and to the war on terror, cities are likely to be the new theatres of such conflicts.

**Hybrid Target**

In the new age of warfare, non-state actors are active in targeting cities and urban spaces to wage global campaigns. Urban spaces provide ample opportunity for terrorists and non-state actors to sneak in and inflict a brutal attack to terrorize large populations through “shock and awe” tactics. American terrorism expert Brian Michael Jenkins thus makes the following points: One, terrorism has become bloodier; two, terrorists have developed new financial resources so that they are less dependent on state sponsors; three, they have evolved new models of organisation and can now wage global campaigns; four, terrorists have effectively exploited new communications technologies; and five, some terrorists have moved beyond tactics to strategy, although none of them have achieved their stated long-term goals so far.

Violence is matter of perception and measurable phenomena. Certain categories of violence associated with political action, such as protests, strikes, demonstrations, tax revolts and civil disobedience movements are not classified as terrorist acts. Earlier, insurgents and guerrilla forces using similar terrorist tactics were exempted from the definition

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of terrorism. However, Alex P. Schimd of the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, observed,

Terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-) clandestine individual, group or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby – in contrast to assassination – the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators. Threat- and violence-based communication processes between terrorist (organization), (imperilled) victims, and main targets are used to manipulate the main target (audience(s)), turning it into a target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion, or propaganda is primarily sought.\(^{18}\)

Schmid goes on to note that terrorism is the “peacetime equivalent of war crime.”\(^{19}\) This leaves no room for ambiguity in defining the terrorist act and clearly differentiates the relationship between terrorism and other violent acts in the society.

Warfare has witnessed a constant change down the ages. Today, terrorist motivation relies on collateral damage and massive destruction. B.S Raghavan explains it in terms of “inhuman hatred, all-consuming ill-will and ranging


\(^{19}\) Ibid.
fanaticism”. The series of attack on cities worldwide makes it clear that non-state actors, insurgents and guerrilla forces are an emerging threat to urban areas.

**Urban Settings**

Global urbanisation is a crucial environmental factor gaining prominence in urban warfare. Generally, an urban area is characterised based on the density of human population. In 1800, less than 3 per cent of world population lived in urban areas. In the 21st century the figure has risen to approximately 47 per cent, says the UN. By 2025 the world population living in urban areas is likely to grow significantly. Particularly, urbanisation in India is ratcheting up very fast. In 1991, only 26 per cent of India’s population lived in urban areas. But projections conclude that, by 2025, 40 per cent of India’s population will be living in cities and two-thirds of the total population growth between 2000 to 2025 would be in urban areas. Mumbai, with 29,650 people per square kilometre, will be the second most populous city in the world by 2020, with over 25 million inhabitants. The future urban area is thus going to be increasingly congested, complex and confusing. At the same time, these cities emerge as centres of politics, finance, industry, transportation, communication and cultural activity.

In the globalised world the city acts as a hub for business and international politics. Rapid urbanisation provides ample

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opportunity for business and trade to flourish, and transforms cities into economical nerve centres of a nation. Elena Irwin, Faculty Director at Ohio State Sustainability Institute, emphasises that “economic growth and urbanisation are inextricably linked.”

Many rural areas have transformed into urban centres because of massive inflow of capital and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Therefore, most nations have their economic strongholds in cities.

The integrity of the nation is also based on its urban spaces due to their heterogeneity. Multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-religious societies are unique, but at times such diversity also creates a tension in urban society. German sociologist George Simmel asserts that urban living has a profound social and psychological effect. According to him, urban dwellers avoid emotional involvement and interactions tend to be economic, rather than social. The urban environment leads to a self-centred lifestyle and curtails socialising in larger ways. But though urban life is self-centred, many sociologists believe that distinctions and differences in class, caste and race still persist in the urban conglomerations.

On a tactical level, high rise building, broad roads and lanes jostle for space with slums, narrow streets and congested lanes. Such irregularities are integral to urban areas, particularly in Third World countries, where urban spaces are not planned and governed properly. Therefore, they appear highly unorganised. On several occasions, when lives are in danger, street vendors, occupied pavements, traffic and haphazard and illegal parking have created major hurdles for emergency teams trying to reach crisis areas.


Is India ready to deal with Hybrid War?

Other major imperatives of emerging urban societies are knowledge and value based. The instant flow of information through modern telecommunications and social and mainstream media, allow inhabitants to communicate constantly in real time across vast distances, giving them a greater and immediate sense of awareness. Moreover, the mainstream media’s stress on immediate dissemination of news has often led to media crews reaching emergency spots before other first responders or law enforcement agencies. In future, the flow of information and media are increasingly going to determine the credibility of the government’s response to a crisis. There are also distinct possibilities that terrorist organizations, non-state actors and insurgents will exploit both modern communication tools and the media to achieve their political and ideological objectives.

Strategically, cities play a critical role in the emerging security environment and offer a viable opportunity for non-state actors, guerrillas, militants and terrorist to wage war against nations. For maximum impact, large gatherings, economic centres, diversity in society, as well as high profile monuments (symbols of nations), are often the targets of non-state actors. If non-state actors manage to execute an attack in a highly urbanised space, they will inevitably succeed in promoting their objectives. Given this scenario, the armed forces’ response to such threats has to be swift and target oriented, while ensuring that no civilians are caught in the cross-fire.

With this in mind, it is worth reflecting on Russia’s Chief of General Staff General Valery Gerasimov and his so-called “Gerasimov Doctrine,” which highlights the increasing importance of non-military means to achieve political and strategic goals, and the ramifications of these means. According to Gerasimov, the lessons of the Arab Spring are that if the
‘rules of war’ have changed, their consequences have not – the results of the ‘coloured revolutions’ are that a “thriving state can, in a matter of months and even days, be transformed into an arena of fierce armed conflict, become a victim of foreign intervention and sink into a web of chaos, humanitarian catastrophe and civil war.”

In terms of the scale of casualties and destruction these new-type of conflicts are equivalent to the consequences of any real war. The Russian Armed forces therefore need to have a clear understanding of the forms and methods of the use and application of force. This corresponds to the statements by other senior Russian officials about how hybrid-type conflicts can evolve and merge—and draw states into interstate wars that then undermine them. Russian Armed forces need to be able to fight that “fierce armed conflict” and also shut out potential “foreign intervention.”

**Humanitarian Issues**

Accomplishing military objectives inside populated areas is difficult. Besides, the rules of conduct devised by the International Humanitarian Law (IHL), largely limit state armed forces in their pursuit of targets in urban areas. IHL particularly focuses on the legality of the conduct of parties to hostility that has reached the level of armed conflict (*jus in bello*).
Is India ready to deal with Hybrid War?

In an asymmetric conflict the weaker side can integrate or conceal itself within civilian populations to avoid detection. If the military target\(^\text{27}\) is within a civilian population, the objective tends to be immune from a wide range of attacks, \textit{per se}.\(^\text{28}\) At the same time, it is understood that a non-state actor benefits from the presence of civilian populations and uses it as a shield or cover in military operation, which is in total violation of international law.\(^\text{29}\) Article 57, Additional Protocol I, offers the following guidelines about the proportion of force to be used and precautions that armed force should take into account before attack\(^\text{30}\):

- Do everything feasible to verify that the objectives to be attacked are neither civilians nor civilian objects and are not subject to special protection, but are military objectives;
- Take all feasible precautions in the choice of means and methods of attack in order to avoid, or minimise, incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians and damage to civilian objects; and
- Refrain from deciding to launch any attack on a target which may be expected to cause incidental loss of

\(^{27}\) Under Article 52, military objectives are limited to “those objects which by their nature, location, purpose, or use make an effective contribution to military action and whose total or partial destruction, capture or neutralization, in the circumstances ruling at the time, offers a definite military advantage”.

\(^{28}\) Article 51, Geneva Convention.


civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects or a combination thereof, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated.

• Apart from these, Additional Protocol Articles 12, 15, 53, 54, 55 and 56 impose liability on armed forces and restrain them from targeting civilian populations.

The IHL also imposes a specific obligation on the armed forces to protect civilians and property in case of war, and the military commander is made responsible for the operation and is obliged to follow the key specific rules laid down by the IHL. Increasingly, non-government organisations, human rights watch groups and international law agencies have the authority to scrutinise the legality of military responses.

In India, the government has arranged a specific mechanism to look into the violation of rules and norms of armed forces engaged in counter-insurgency and anti-terrorist activity. In principle, the Indian Constitution guarantees fundamental rights to citizens, and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) is authorised to look into any violation of such rights. Nevertheless, the issue related to urban-combat is yet to be seriously analysed by the civil and/or legal administration. Civil society, human rights activist groups and media seek strong responses from the government to restrain the use of armed forces in urban areas. Indian authorities would need to closely study emerging trends in urban warfare if they are to craft appropriate responses.

India and Urban Combat Experience

India’s security perception over the past 70 years has been dominated by conventional military thinking. At the same time, India faces a unique internal security problem, partially aided
by external actors such as Pakistan’s ISI and China. Rapidly
developing India faces crucial 21st century security challenges
from all quarters.

A report submitted to the Planning Commission under the
heading “India Vision 2020” pointed out some key security
issue for future India. There is no direct reference to urban
environments, but it points out the key ‘Factors Influencing
the Security Environment in 2020’31:

- The twin revolution of rising expectations and
  information and communication will continue.
- The fundamental ideological conflict between India
  and Pakistan is unlikely to be resolved without a major
  socio-political change in Pakistan.
- Territorial disputes with neighbours that have defied
  resolution for 50 years may not lend themselves to an
  early solution.
- Religious extremism and radical politics will continue
to have an adverse impact on core values.
- Rising dependence on energy imports will make us
  increasingly vulnerable, economically, as well as
diplomatically.
- Public opinion, both domestic and international, and
  the media will become increasingly important forces
  in international affair.
- The international order is likely to evolve into a
  polycentric configuration, with its centre of gravity
  shifting increasingly to Asia, which will include seven
  out of the ten largest economies and six out of the eight
  nuclear weapon states.

31 S.P. Gupta, “India Vision 2020”, Planning Commission of India, 2002,
The increasing economic and military strength of China may pose a serious challenge to India’s security unless adequate measures are taken.

In the emerging security environment, the Indian armed forces will be increasingly responsible for countering internal security issues. Article 355 enjoins the Union to protect the States against “internal disturbance” and “armed rebellion”. It is from this Article that the central and state governments draw their authority to call upon the armed forces to provide aid to civil authority.

The Indian Army formed a specialised force called “Para Commandos” to deal with special operations. Starting from the 1971 India-Pakistan War, the Para Commandos have participated in many operations in India and abroad: Operation Blue Star (1984), the Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka (1987), Operation Cactus in the Maldives (1988), the Kargil War (1999) and Operation Khukri in Sierra Leone (2000) are notable among these.

Other specialised units formed for counter-terrorism and urban-warfare operations include the Ghatak Unit (Indian Army), Indian Navy’s Marine Commando (MARCOS) and Garuda Commando (Indian Air Force). Paramilitary special forces such as the National Security Guard (NSG), Special Protection Group (SPG), Special Frontier Group (SFG), Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (COBRA) and the newly formed Force One elite commando force of the Mumbai Police are trained to respond to any urban terrorist attack within 15 minutes.32

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Is India ready to deal with Hybrid War?

To facilitate the armed forces to carry out such operations, they are provided legal cover under the constitutional and legal statutes such as:

- Constitution of India, Articles 352 and 355.
- Code of Criminal Procedure, Section 127 to 131.

This legal cover imposes great responsibilities on the armed forces during such operations. However, civil right activists and human right groups have lodged a series of complaints against armed forces engaged in counter-insurgency and anti-terrorist operations. The best example to quote is Operation Blue Star, where the Army’s assault on the Golden Temple complex, the holiest Sikh shrine, resulted in a series of human rights’ violations. Many top government officials, including K.P.S Gill, who served twice as Director General of Police (DGP) Punjab, criticised the pattern of the use of military force in operation Blue Star, resulting in enormous human loss and material damage. This operation subsequently led to the assassination of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and the subsequent anti-Sikh riots across the country. This case demonstrates the necessity of extreme caution while employing military force in the urban context. Even paramilitary forces employed in urban-centric warfare should be trained in all aspects of such operations, particularly including human rights issues and a high degree of political consciousness, apart from normal combat training.

Prakash Panneerselvam

PREPARING SOLDIERS FOR THE HYBRID WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

Soldiers are essentially trained to kill or disable enemy forces during combat operations. But in urban warfare, they must temper that training to ensure the safety of civilians and also prevent unacceptable losses while doing so. To help them in this, smart robots, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) and precision munitions offer a wide range of option for policy makers as well as tactical planners. At the same time, non-state actors are also learning from past experience, presenting a more complex security challenge for the armed forces. The hybrid aspect of urban areas thus becomes a “centre of gravity” for non-state actors to wage a covert or direct assault on civilian populations to perpetuate their political or ideological struggle.

The responsibility of the soldier in this unique environment is thus enormous. The problem of identifying “foe or friend” remains the centrepiece of argument for civilian and combatant casualties. When differentiating enemy from friend is achievable, civilians and non-combatants will become less vulnerable during urban-conflict. Operational preparedness and a policy level approach for the armed forces, which might possibly reduce civilian, combatant and non-combatant causalities in urban-environments, is consequently necessary.

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

The military is principally trained for conventional warfare. Fighting in built-up areas requires special battle techniques and tactics, as well as conditioning to overcome urban combat stress. Past performance guarantees nothing for future operations, and therefore, training sequences need to be revised constantly to match evolving situations. Soldiers must be prepared to absorb and understand complex situations before taking decisions in
dynamic built-up areas, rather than waiting for orders from higher authorities. Bottoms-up learning needs to be inculcated into the training methodology, and this should also fulfil the soldier’s career aspirations. This, in turn, encourages the urban war-fighter to assume responsibility and adopt correct attitudes while fighting an enemy in built-up areas.

**REDUCE QUANTUM OF FORCE**

Armed forces operating inside built-up areas must use appropriate force to eliminate potential threats. Exercising massive fire-power against a weaker adversary results in excessive and avoidable collateral damage. Further, falling debris can provide fortifications for the enemy to mount attacks against the armed forces. In close quarter combat, the debris and destruction caused by shelling can jeopardise troop movements and make them vulnerable to enemy fire. Massive use of force in urban areas can result in destruction of lives and property. The use of air power, in particular, must be optimised, overwhelmingly for gathering intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, and transportation of personnel and material. Countries such as the US, Israel and Sri Lanka have effectively used air assets in operations against insurgents, which resulted in many civilian deaths. Moreover, the frequent use of the Predator UAVs to track and attack Taliban near the Af-Pak border resulted in numerous civilian casualties, and also strained the US-Pakistan relationship.

Indian counter-insurgency and anti-terrorist operations principally take place internally. The inappropriate use of force not only kills fellow citizens, but also turns the public will against the government. Proportionate force is, consequently, necessary to tackle the menace. New weapon systems, with greater precision and lower levels of lethality, designed for
urban environments, need to be explored and deployed. Traditional tactics such as rolling in tanks, artillery, and conventional infantry in cities must be strictly prohibited and special command and control systems developed to monitor and direct soldiers in urban warfare to minimise the actual use of force in urban combat.

**Doctrine Driven Technology**

Rapidly evolving technology and sophisticated gadgets play a vital role in reducing civilian and combatant casualties in urban area. Basically, superior technology gives the armed forces an edge while dealing with enemy forces. In hybrid warfare, strategic thinkers believe technology has to be modified according to need of an operator (soldier). Advances in limited effect ammunition can help planners and operators reduce collateral damage by inflicting a carefully measured quantum of destruction.

Non-lethal technology will also be helpful for the armed forces engaging in urban-combat other than war. For instance, in peacekeeping operations or a humanitarian situation, non-lethal weapons can help the armed force perform their duty without inflicting major casualties. However, operators should not over-use such weapons. Moreover, any indiscriminate or excessive use can also prove counter-productive. For example, the overuse of “pellet guns” in Kashmir has led to a huge uproar and public anger against the armed forces in the Valley.

**Stress in Hybrid-Combat**

Combat in open space gives much room for soldiers to engage a target. But operations in built-up areas with complex building structures restrict a soldier’s view, creating tension and panic. Stress is compounded by the pressure to engage
targets while minimising civilian casualties. This stress creates negative reaction and can result in misconduct. In long-drawn deployments, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD) and Combat Stress Disorder (CSD) undermine a soldier’s combat effectiveness. Soldiers deployed in extreme condition are prone to CSD. For instance, as many as 891 suicide cases have been reported by the Indian defence forces between 2011 and 2018. In many cases, stress has led the killing of fellow officers or soldiers, as well as civilians in combat areas.

Stress disorders can be partially addressed by tough and realistic training, making soldiers understand the operational environment and keeping them informed about enemy tactics and movements. A habit of following Rules of Engagement (ROE) and the army’s moral code must also be inculcated. Scientific debriefing after operations help soldiers understand the environment and keep them healthy.

**Real Time Situational Awareness**

Real Time Situational Awareness (RTSA) is going to be important component for future soldiers. The flow of intelligence has to be channelised properly to reach every operator in the battle field and alert them about the situation around them in real time. Enclosed urban spaces limit a soldier’s ability to look beyond a certain range; so intelligence gathered through various other sources invariably helps them engage the correct target.

RTSA, human intelligence and intelligence through other (technological) means can be major sources to help distinguish “foe from the friend” in the urban battlefield. It also helps the

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soldier in a vulnerable or disadvantaged position in a built-up area find the right direction for pursuit or engagement.

**PERCEPTION MANAGEMENT**

The military or any other armed force in today’s context has to be prepared to face public scrutiny. Perception management thus becomes an imperative to protect the image of armed forces in battle and gain or retain public support. Social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram and others play an important role in the modern world. Terrorists around the globe have been using these platforms to recruit members for their organisations, collect donations and spread fake news to create panic in the society. The Islamic State/Daesh is the best example, as it effectively used social media to spread their ideology around the globe. They have also used these media tools to recruit members for their organisation in Syria and Iraq to fight against government forces. The armed forces, consequently, have a huge additional responsibility to use social media to counter these narratives.

Soldiers are the centrepiece of any armed force. Fighting in built-up areas is a relatively new discourse in the Indian armed forces. Since India is surrounded by unstable and hostile countries, the armed forces have to prepare for every eventuality. Other than war, the army’s preparation for Stability and Support Operation (SASO) is necessitated by India’s power projection in Asia. The increase in population and the growing pace of India’s economy will open new urban centres across the nation. Since urban areas are the country’s nerve centres, the government will need to respond accordingly, to set up specialised security arrangements across all cities to deal with all possible threats spawned by hybrid warfare.
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October 28, 2019  
(Sd) Ajai Sahni  
Signature of Publisher
Oppression is a phenomenon experienced by many women in Pakistan. Powerlessness is an expected result, and is a situation where women have little control over aspects of their lives. The foundation for women’s oppression in Pakistan rests in the political, social, cultural, and patriarchal structure of society, where men control women’s opportunities, including the right to education. In such backdrop, a reasonable way to reduce oppression is by promoting knowledge in higher education among the female population of the country.

In developing countries like Pakistan, women’s empowerment is of great importance, as almost 30 per cent of
women are considered both economically and socially poor. A high level of female education is of utmost importance, because it provides a rock-solid base to heighten gender equality.

As of 1974, there were 121 madrasas in the Punjab province of Pakistan. By 2016, this number had increased to approximately 13,782. The mushrooming of madrasas in Punjab has long been a key recruiting ground for militant groups. Punjab is Pakistan’s second largest and most densely populated province, with a population exceeding 82 million, comprising 56 per cent of the country’s total population. Most of Pakistan’s military support also comes from this province. It can be said that, if Pakistan were to collapse due to Islamist extremism, then it is in Punjab where this would occur, as it is a fertile ground for various extremist religious activities, and a rich recruitment area for madrasa students.

3 M. Meraj and M.B. Sadaqat, “Gender equality and socio-economic development through women’s empowerment in Pakistan”, Ritsumeikan Journal of Asia Pacific Studies, Volume 34, Number 16, 2016, pp. 125-140.
Pakistan: Role of *Madrasas* in Women’s Empowerment

Over a period of time, Islamist radicalisation has made serious inroads in the province. The wave of terrorism in Punjab gained momentum and hit Pakistan itself when military forces captured Islamabad’s Red Mosque in 2007. This incident represented the first clear case of *Ulama* and students (both male and female) within a Pakistani *madrasa* taking up arms in opposition to the state, and gravitating towards militancy. After 9/11, the then Pakistani President Musharraf decided to ally with the U.S. in the ‘War on Terror’. The President declared that any *madrasa* that taught extremism or was found to be involved in destructive or militant activities would be shut down. Musharraf’s government began demolishing militant *madrasas* as a part of its pledge to the U.S. and to its War on Terror. In January of 2007, the government informed the Red Mosque administration that its main madrasas would be shut down.

This incident instigated retaliation from the young students of the Red Mosque, who for months had campaigned to Talibanise Pakistan, wanting to turn it into a state that enforced the strictest version of Islam as the Law of the land. In July 2007, the government deployed military troops in response to the Red Mosque’s violent campaign to impose Sharia law. Young students, including female, were pouring into the *madrasa* to ‘martyr’ themselves. During the eight-day siege, over 150 students, militants, and soldiers were killed. A female *madrasa* student from the Red Mosque described the incident as an apocalypse, because many women were martyred in the hail of bullets from all sides.

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8 H. Trivedi and M. A. Naqvi, “Among the believers”, Munjusha Films, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lNut1K34aFg&list=PLV4HS70bPiZ3JgHzv bZ5PS37zsghBzTDG.
Pakistan’s madrasa education system is currently changing. This change is necessary to prevent madrasas from getting trapped in a cycle of violence because of the ideological divide in society that leads to conflict over those who support Sharia law and those who do not. In 2006, Musharraf implemented a five-year plan to reform madrasas. By 2008, over 12,000 out of the estimated 13,000 madrasas in Punjab had registered with the government to receive funding. However, updated information demonstrated that madrasas in Pakistan had opposed all of the government’s efforts at reform.9

Between 2007 and 2014, there were 3,700 terrorist attacks, 1,200 schools destroyed, and over 50,000 people died.10 Militant groups were out for revenge to support the cause of the Red Mosque and attack military and civilian targets. For example, the Peshawar school attack in December 16, 2014, caused global public outcry. In response, the Pakistani Army launched a major offensive into the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan- TTP’s stronghold, flattening villages and confiscating weapons. Over one million people were internally displaced within Pakistan as a result of these operations.11

The international community views madrasas as having less to do with education and more to do with a security threat to the modern world.12 The Afghanistan Ministry of Defense (MoD) reported that the jihadis who are at war with the Afghan Defense Forces include many students from madrasas

10 H. Trivedi and M.A. Naqvi, 2015, op. cit.
11 Ibid.
in Pakistan. The MoD emphasises, further, that many of these madrasas educate and equip students so that they are prepared to fight the Afghan government forces.\textsuperscript{13}

In the United States, madrasas are viewed as a global security threat, which prompted Washington to provide Pakistan over USD 225 million in aid in support of their reform efforts.\textsuperscript{14} Pakistan was thought to be one of the most strategically important countries for the United States, evidenced by the investment of more than USD 30 billion over a period of 60 years\textsuperscript{15}, to help reform the country and produce a more stable and democratic nation, more capable of countering terrorism.\textsuperscript{16}

The improvements surrounding reformed madrasas for women are on the rise in Pakistan.\textsuperscript{17} This change is needed for females, who constitute 48 per cent of the country’s population, but have fewer education and empowerment opportunities when compared to their male counterparts.\textsuperscript{18} Madrasas face a myriad of challenges in preparing females for life in a rapidly

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\textsuperscript{14} Masooda Bano, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{16} H. Mirahmadi, et. al., “Empowering Pakistan’s civil society to counter violent extremism”, \textit{Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice}, Volume 8, Number 1, 2016, pp. 188-214.
\textsuperscript{17} M. Farooq, “Disciplining the feminism: Girls’ madrasa education in Pakistan”, \textit{The Historian}, Volume 3, Number 2, 2013, pp. 1-25.
\end{flushleft}
changing Pakistani society with the emergence of modernity and globalisation. One of the key components of reformed madrasas for females is to equip students with economically marketable skills and allow them to seek gainful employment upon graduation. In acknowledgement of increasing rivalry with public schools, a large number of madrasas have proven quite eager to change in response to local educational demands.

**Obstacles for Women’s Empowerment in Pakistan**

In spite of increased international efforts, the situation with regard to women’s empowerment in Pakistan has not significantly improved. Some of the barriers concerning women’s empowerment in Pakistan are violence, male dominance, discrimination, subordination, and inequality of rights. Violence in the form of sexual abuse, domestic abuse, acid burning, and honour killings are some of the central elements that shape women’s disempowerment in Pakistan. According to the report of HRCP (2015), between 2008 and

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A. Mohyuddin and M. Ambreen, op. cit.
Pakistan: Role of Madrasas in Women’s Empowerment

2015, there were more than 3,000 women victims of honour killing in Pakistan. In 2015, there were 55 acid attacks against women in the country.24 Other main hurdles for women’s empowerment in Pakistan include oppressive patriarchal structures, rigid socio-cultural customs and traditions, poverty, strict interpretations of Islam, and discriminatory laws.25

**Oppressive patriarchal structures**- Pakistani society exhibits a patriarchal mindset, with the dominance of men over women in all matters of family life.26 The word patriarchy means the rule of the father and originally was used to describe a particular type of male-dominated family. The characteristics of Pakistan’s patriarchal society consist of extremely restrictive codes of behaviour for women, such as the practice of rigid gender segregation and a dominant ideology linking family honour to female virtue. As a result, men are responsible for safeguarding family honour through complex social arrangements that ensure the protection, restriction, and dependence of women.27 These patriarchal attitudes towards women in Pakistan are deep-rooted and support the discriminatory practices against them.28

**Gender discriminatory laws and gender biases**- A number of progressive laws supporting women’s empowerment were passed between 2010 and 2012. These laws include the National Commission on Status of Women Act, the Domestic

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26 Ibid.
Violence Bill, and the Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace. At the official level, several laws have been adopted in Pakistan to safeguard women (i.e., The Women in Distress and Detention Fund (Amendment) Act, 2011; Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection), Act 2012; and the National Commission on the Status of Women Act, 2012). However, in spite of these safeguards, cultural patterns in Pakistan do not let women enjoy their legal and religious rights protected by the law and provided by Islam. The gender discrimination involves income disparity and social status where men benefit from wages, social position, practices, and laws.

Women in Pakistan also face discrimination in family law, property law, and in the judicial system. Women are still not safeguarded under constitutional provisions. It seems that once the origin or basis of a law or a rule is claimed to be Islamic, the Pakistani Government and political leaders dare not repeal them. The political costs of defying the divine word of God are too high, and, usually, the Government simply does not act, or acts inconsistently. Today, Islamic socio-religious

laws exist through Hudood laws, promulgated in 1979 and enforced in 1980. They are a collection of five criminal laws, collectively known as the Hudood Ordinances.

The Ordinance criminalises Zina, which is defined as extra-marital sex, including adultery and fornication. Additionally, the Qanoon-e-Shahadat (Law of Evidence) states that the testimony of a female is considered half that of a man’s in a Pakistani court of law. Thus, three out of four Pakistani women in prison under its Hudood laws are rape victims because they are required to produce four male witnesses to prove their allegation, which is nearly impossible. As a result, many Pakistani women who report their rape to the police end up being charged with adultery on their part, and the Sharia courts in Pakistan punish them with long term imprisonment and, in some extreme cases, even the death sentence.35

Significantly, Muhktar Mai, a survivor of a gang rape in 2002, was able to get one man out of the group of six of the more powerful Pakistani men who raped her convicted. However, she and her family continue to live with permanent death threats. In the past, the male dominated Pakistani society justified honour killings through the notion that females must refrain from sexuality to maintain the honour of the family.36 In times of communal strife, this leads to women being viewed by their male family members as threats against the honour of their respective religions and communities. Only recently has the Parliament in Pakistan taken a positive step to protect women against honour killings. On October 6, 2016, an Anti-honour Killing Bill, setting the minimum punishment for an offender

36 G.C. Chua, et.al., 2016, op. cit.
to be 25 years in prison, was passed.\textsuperscript{37} However, the law on honour killings, like a range of other laws, remains on paper, and society continues to be indifferent to the plight of women. According to a July, 2019 report, in the province of Punjab, over the preceding one year, 234 cases of honour killing were reported, of which six were withdrawn. As many as 400 of 439 suspects involved in the remaining 228 cases were arrested, but only 2 per cent of the accused were convicted. A Police source said that the main reason for this abysmally low rate of conviction is that the aggrieved party tends to reconcile with the suspects and the matter never ends up in court.\textsuperscript{38} Seeking justice in such cases is a long-drawn process and women are at a great social and institutional disadvantage. In many cases the community and tribal elders arbitrate for ‘restoring the honour’ of the victim’s family by convincing the parties to reach a compromise and getting the killer pardoned by victim’s family.

Pakistani women continue to face widespread discrimination in other aspects of their lives including the home, employment sector, and community.\textsuperscript{39} Even after women get married, they are not given freedom to work or make decisions.\textsuperscript{40} There is also strong social pressure for women to stay at home while enjoying fewer benefits relating to nutrition, health, and education, when compared to their male counterparts. Improvements in women’s empowerment in Pakistan cannot

\textsuperscript{37} H. Fatima, et. al., “Pakistan steps up to remove “honour” from honour killing”, \textit{The Lancet Global Health}, Volume 5, Number 2, 2017.
\textsuperscript{38} “2% of honour killing suspects convicted”, July 5, 2019, https://www.pakistangendernews.org/2-of-honour-killing-suspects-convicted/
\textsuperscript{40} M. Qureshi, “The gender differences in school enrolment and returns to education in Pakistan”, \textit{The Pakistan Development Review}, Volume 51, Number 3, 2012, 219-256.
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occur until there is good governance with accountability and the rule of law.\textsuperscript{41}

\textit{Poverty}- Given the burden of poverty on women in Pakistan, the significance of empowering them cannot be overstated. Poverty, together with established norms of gender inequality, contributes to multiple complications for them. Combating poverty remains the top priority in almost all the national plans of the Pakistani government. Pakistan is facing the formidable challenge of poverty-reduction because of its status as the sixth most populous nation in the world. Since independence, Pakistan’s population increased almost five times from 34 million in 1951 to 173.5 in 2010 and 207.8 million by 2017\textsuperscript{42} By 2050, Pakistan is expected to be the 4th most populous country in the world with more than 348 million people.\textsuperscript{43}

In Pakistan, 60.3 per cent of the total population lives on less than two dollars a day, with the rural areas having more severe and absolute poverty compared to the urban areas of the country.\textsuperscript{44} Empirical evidence has found that one way to reduce poverty in Pakistan is the education of the female head of the household.\textsuperscript{45} Mass education is the only way to eradicate poverty and act on the findings on women’s status


\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.

in the developing country of Pakistan. Women’s education in Pakistan remains grossly underinvested by families because of the direct and indirect cost of sending girls to school and because of safety concerns in secular schools. Consequently, many families are more willing to send their daughters to madrasas because they are thought to be safer. Families are also swayed by religious and community leaders who encourage them to send their daughters to madrasas, so that these leaders can enhance their own economic security.

Strict religious interpretation of Islam- The misinterpretation of Islam is one of the reasons why women’s empowerment is so difficult to achieve in Pakistan. Religious doctrines impact directly on Muslim women’s empowerment. Religious beliefs such as thepardah system exclude Pakistani women from the public sphere and confine them to a domestic sphere for a significant portion of their life.

Other research has found that Islamic leaders may promote or hinder South Asian Muslim women in pursuing

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46 F.Y. Bukhari and M. Ramzan, 2013, op. cit.
47 M. Qureshi, 2012, op. cit.
49 F.Y. Bukhari and M. Ramzan, 2013, op. cit.
opportunities, such as educational attainment. For example, Islamic leaders who promote women’s rights could help women fulfill their academic aspirations and improve their impoverished conditions. Conversely, Islamic leaders can also create a lot of hurdles for women by extracting references from Islamic texts or traditions that are unsupportive of women’s empowerment.

**Education and Empowerment**

Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world with a total population of 207.8 million. Pakistan’s rapidly growing population adds to the many challenges faced by the nation’s education system. The educational system is complex and inadequate, and, as such, has not met basic learning needs. With respect to education and women’s empowerment, it can very well be said that, higher education not only empowers women, but also helps them to enlarge their world views, choices, and growth of knowledge within the basic structures of families in a traditional society. Educated women are more likely to view the world through a different lens, which may lead them to improve their social conditions. For example, education helps women shape their views on issues like violence against them and makes them more likely to demand their basic human rights in existing patriarchal countries.

Similarly, educated women are more likely to raise educated girls with greater awareness of their personal rights, and

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elevated confidence and freedom to make decisions that affect their lives.\textsuperscript{54}

The biggest obstacle to educational reform is the absence of a blueprint such as that used across the globe.\textsuperscript{55} This study attempted to investigate reformed \textit{madrasas} in Pakistan as a way to expand universal knowledge of educational reform. Reform efforts differ depending on the context, and researchers need to investigate ways they can create a “theory of change” that can be applied more widely.\textsuperscript{56}

\textbf{Key Elements of Reformed Madrasas}

\textit{State cooperation and support}- A Madaris Reform Project (MRP) was launched in 2002 in Pakistan to strengthen lines of communication between madrasas and the government. The MRP planned to fund the salaries of teachers to be appointed to teach non-religious subjects. A salary of Rs. 4000 per month (equivalent to USD 38.16) would be given to teachers for teaching formal subjects at the secondary level and Rs. 10,000 per month (equivalent to USD 90.46) at the intermediate level.\textsuperscript{57}


\textsuperscript{57} D.G. White and J.A. Levin, “Navigating the turbulent waters of school reform guided by complexity theory”, \textit{Complicity: An International Journal of Complexity and Education}, Volume 13, Number 1, 2016, pp. 43-80.

There have been other attempts by the Government of Pakistan to reform madrasas:\(^58\):

- In 2000-2003, the Musharraf Government introduced the Education Sector Reform Action Plan and focused on the inclusion of modern subjects in madrasas and registering every madrasa.
- In 2001, the government created a Pakistan Madrasa Education Board (PMEB) to establish a network of “model madrasas” and encourage madrasas to provide both religious and secular education. They also established public-private partnerships (PPPs) in attempts to gain support for their educational reform process.
- In 2002, the government initiated the Deeni Madaris Ordinance (Voluntary Registration and Regulation) and promised funding to madrasas that formally registered with the government.
- In 2005, the Pakistani state ordered madrasas to expel all foreign students.
- In 2009, the government tried to establish a Madrassa Regulatory Authority under the Interior Ministry to control madrasas, but this was rejected by the Ittehad-e-Tanzeem-ul-Madaris Pakistan (ITMP), an umbrella organisation of madrasa oversight boards.

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• In October 2010, the government succeeded in making an agreement with ITMP for the introduction of modern subjects in some courses in madrasas.

It is difficult to assess the positive impact, if any, of these reforms, because most of the initiatives called for voluntary submission to regulations, leaving many madrasas uninvolved. At present, it remains unclear how many madrasas receive government-supported funds in Pakistan.

Train program for teachers- The government of Pakistan has a long history of advocating the importance of quality teachers in education to raise the status of the country. At the first educational conference held in Karachi in 1947, Muhammad Ali Jinnah stated, “We should redouble our efforts to make teacher education rich. This will strengthen the system of education and in this way, we can raise the status and honour of Pakistan in the community of Nations.”

Teachers in madrasas play a crucial role in the learning process for female students and must receive current training to meet the modern demands of Pakistani society. Teachers in madrasas need to be encouraged to participate in the numerous free teacher training workshops organised by the government.

59 Sanchita Bhattacharya, 2009, op. cit.
60 Masooda Bano, “Beyond politics: The reality of a Deobandi madrasa in Pakistan”, Journal of Islamic Studies, Volume 8, Number 1, 2007a, 43-68.
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and non-government sectors. Further, reformed madrasas require qualified teachers exposed to the various teaching methodologies that enhance the learning process of Islamic religious education.

Reformed madrasas in Pakistan are beginning to reflect modern teaching methods in their studies. Some Pakistani madrasa teachers embrace modern teaching styles such as using leading or thought-provoking questions and encouraging students to ask questions about what they’re seeking to understand. On the contrary, some madrasa teachers are less likely to embrace modernisation, and show less support for equal rights for women as compared to secular teachers.

Curriculum- To stay abreast of secular universities and to equip future students with the changing conditions of the world, madrasas need to expand their curriculum. The concept of curriculum reform for madrasas has been part of Pakistani society since the early 1980s with a plan to modernise their education system. This curriculum reform consisted of introducing secular subjects such as English, science, and

68 S.W.A. Kauser and A.W. Sial, 2015, op. cit.
mathematics, alongside religion-related subjects. In 2007, the government began to focus on reforming the Deobandi curriculum, the largest madrasa education board for women. This change represented nearly three-quarters of the madrasas and 90 per cent of all the female students. The Dars-e-Nizami is the curriculum of the Deobandi madrasas, and it centres on creating more docile, subservient, and domesticated women, with a focus on the specific manners required to conform to their image of the ideal Muslim woman.

Infrastructure and information technologies- Reforms are also expanding infrastructure and information and communications technologies (ICTs) into the domain of madrasas in Pakistan. The infrastructure of madrasas in Pakistan can be situated on a continuum from the most traditional one-room schoolhouse to elaborate modern campuses. Some recently established private madrasas offer modern infrastructure, with well-endowed libraries, and science and computer laboratories. Libraries have been shown to be useful in female education because they provide relevant knowledge and skills through ICTs. Advanced technologies

71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
74 S.W.A. Kauser and A.W. Sial, 2015, op. cit.
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inspire confidence and self-reliance, and also equip women with abilities to address current problems of the modern world.\(^{75}\)

*Extra-curricular activities*- Some female madrasas are providing extracurricular training to their students in order to encourage proper Islamic etiquette and manners.\(^{76}\) One type of extra-curricular activity observed in female madrasas was the salat workshop. Salat is the ritual prayer, one of the five pillars of Islam.\(^{77}\) It includes different body postures and recitation of different meaningful Ayat (verses) during each posture.\(^{78}\)

Activities that have successfully been introduced in the reformed madrasas across Pakistan\(^{79}\), however, include strong writing and language programs to help prepare students for entering the real world of publication. Some reformed madrasas have introduced the arts into their curriculum. The students of Jamia Ashraf-ul Madaris, Karachi, receive martial arts training from a national champion. Further, conversation sessions or presentations are also common extracurricular activities in some madrasas. The Jamia Salfia Madrasa in Islamabad has a seminar week at the end of the first term of the year, and


\(^{78}\) H. Doufesh, et. al., “Effects of Muslims praying (salat) on EEG gamma activity”, *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice*, Volume 8, Number 24, 2016, pp. 6-10.

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has included topics such as “Torch Bearer of Humanitarian Services or Centres of Terrorism”.

**Madrasa Education for Women in Pakistan**

Higher education in Pakistan is ranked among the lowest in the world and is accessed by just 6 per cent of the population. The country uses just over 2 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on higher education, despite a commitment to spend 4 per cent by 2018. Higher education for women in Pakistan can be obtained in four ways: through the secular university systems, *madrasas*, private universities, or colleges. This study examined female madrasas because they are so important to Pakistani women and are scarcely researched in the literature.

Multilayered reasons exist why this type of education is considered important in Pakistan. Many Pakistanis argue that madrasas are the most important educational institution in society because their core religious curriculum focuses on the teaching of *Hadith* (source of Prophet Muhammad’s sayings). One of Prophet Muhammad’s sayings is that a child who memorises the *Quran* completely goes to heaven and

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80 Ibid.
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takes along ten relatives. However, *Hadith* is just one aspect of *madrasa* syllabus which includes other facets: Quranic education, jurisprudence, Prophet Muhammad’s actions, biography of the Prophet, philosophy and *Sharia* (Islamic law).\(^{84}\)

The national emphasis on female madrasas today is due to the *Ulama* who believed that women in their households needed education. From the 1990s onward, it became a customary practice for male *madrasas* to open a separate traditional female *madrasa*, which has allowed for the continued growth and development of women.\(^{85}\) Traditional female madrasas have a significant role in the prospects of women’s education and empowerment in Pakistan.\(^{86}\) Before their emergence, women from religiously conservative families had few educational options.\(^{87}\) Female *madrasas* allow unique opportunities for such women to gain access to the outside world. However, women are still very much excluded in the social hierarchy of Pakistan, and the *pardah* system (segregation of women) is very much prevalent inside most madrasas. A former female madrassa student belonging to the Red mosque *madrasa* network in Pakistan noted that the laws of Islam restricted females from stepping outside the walls of the *madrasa*.\(^{88}\)

The access to education for women living in rural areas is even more limited. Many female madrasas provide room and boarding subsidies, thereby increasing the opportunity for

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84 H. Trivedi and M. A. Naqvi, 2015, op. cit.
88 H. Trivedi and M. A. Naqvi, 2015, op. cit.
rural women to obtain an education. Past research indicates that parents in conservative rural areas were more willing to send their daughters to madrasas as against secular schools. Some Pakistani parents tend to view secular universities as problematic and are more comfortable in sending their daughters to madrasas as a way to safeguard their family honour and traditional roles. Female madrasas appear to be on the rise because of a growing interest in the influence that they have on women’s education in Muslim countries such as Pakistan.

Five recognised Islamic schools of thought are represented under the Wafaq (the umbrella organisation of madrasas). In Pakistan, the majority of madrasas are registered under the Wafaq and include the following: Wafaq al-Madaris al-Arabia (Deobandi); Tanzim al-Madaris al-Arabiya (Barelvi); Wafaq al-Madaris al-Shia (Shia); Wafaq al-Madaris Al-Salafiya (Ahl-i-Hadith); and the Rabita al-Madaris (Jamaat-i-Islami). A review from the madrasa registration data showed that, on average, around 25 per cent of the madrasa student population in each Wafaq is female. Deobandi, Jamaat-i-Islami, Ahl-i-Hadith, and Barelvi Wafaq belong to Sunni Muslims, and the Shia Wafaq belongs to Shia Muslims.

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91 M. J. Bhatti, 2013, op. cit.
93 Sanchita Bhattacharya, 2009, op. cit.
Past research on religious views toward women’s education found differences among the Sunni and Shia Islamic sects. For example, Islamic perspectives on women’s education derived from interviews of female madrasa students studying at the postgraduate level found that Shia women demonstrated more liberal views about co-education at the university level, compared to the Sunni women. The previously mentioned study dealt with both the Shia and Sunni sects of Islam. The current study is based on interviews of students attending female-only madrasas studying at the bachelor’s level or master’s level of religious education.95

A hierarchy exists within the madrasa schooling system, which is marked by five levels of education. Each level has a clearly spelled out curriculum. Level one is the *ibtida’iya* and consists of primary school. Level two is the *khasa* and represents the senior secondary level. Level three is the aliya and is equivalent to a bachelor’s degree. Level four is the *alimiya* and amounts to a master’s degree. Level five is the elite madrasa, which offers *takhassus* (specialisation) and is equivalent to a doctoral degree.

**Purpose of the Study**

First, the present study explores the role of reformed *madrasas* (high vs. low) on women’s empowerment in Pakistan. The term reformed *madrasa* was created by the researcher in this study to describe key aspects of this type of education. Highly reformed *madrasas* represent schools that have six or more of the following components: infrastructure (e.g., good classrooms, libraries, electricity, gas, and telephone facilities), extracurricular activities for students, job options (e.g., religious scholar), use of modern subjects/textbooks in their

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syllabus, funds from the government, state supported teachers, and training programs for teachers. The low reformed madrasas represent schools with five or fewer components. Second, this study examined the effect of educational attainment equivalent to bachelor’s degree (aliya) and master’s degree (alimiya) on women’s empowerment. Third, the study investigated the role of schools of thought in women’s empowerment. Fourth, the study captured women’s empowerment experiences within the cultural context of a Muslim community. Finally, the study strived to assist policy development within the education division to provide more opportunities for women’s empowerment in Pakistan.

**Population and Sample**

Data was collected from madrasas (N=5) located in the Punjab province of Pakistan. Three of these were of the Jamaat-i-Islami, Ahl-i-Hadith, and Deobandi schools of thought in Vehari District located in Vehari city. Data was also collected from two madrasas of the Ahl-i-Hadith and Barelvi schools of thought, located in Jahanian city, Khanewal District. The participants in this study were from the Sunni sect of Islam and belonged to one of the four schools of thought: Deobandi, Barelvi, Jamaat-i-Islami, or the Ahl-i-Hadith. This study used a convenience sampling frame to select female students from madrasas located in the Punjab province of Pakistan. The province had a respectable availability of female madrasas from many schools of thought. The researcher used convenience sampling because the contacts in the Pakistani community had connections just in the Khanewal or Vehari districts, and hence were only able to provide access to these

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Madrasas. Consequently, the sample used in this study did not represent comparable madrasas from all four schools of thought. A priori power analysis determined the sample size needed to reject the null hypotheses (N=132).

This study’s inclusion criteria removed the influence of specific confounding variables. The inclusion criteria consisted of attributes that are essential for the sample selection to participate in the study. First, they must attend madrasas in urban areas of Punjab. Second, their institution must be a member of one of the five schools of thought. Third, they must study at the bachelor’s or master’s level of education. Fourth, they must be 18-25 years of age. Fifth, they must be competent in the Urdu language (written and oral). Finally, they must give their consent to participate in the research.

Exclusion criteria identified responses by the sample that required their removal from taking part in the research. The exclusion criteria for non-participation consisted of the following elements: students failed to give consent, studied at a madrasa outside the Punjab province, attended secular universities, studied at the doctoral level, were not members of one of the identified schools of thoughts, were outside the age range (18-25), or were not competent in the Urdu language. These exclusion criteria ensured that all participants used in the data collection met the same standards.  

Findings of the Study

As part of this research, interviews and data collection strategies took place at five madrasas in Punjab. Two adjoining districts of Khanewal and Vehari located in the southern part of the province were used as the main research sites because

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they were known to have madrasas of all schools of thought. Representation of different educational levels was addressed by considering only madrasas that had levels three and four, equivalent to either bachelor’s or master’s level education.

A Concurrent Transformative Mixed Methods Approach was used to increase the validity of this study while minimizing its limitations. By taking into account both the quantitative and qualitative data, this researcher promoted a deeper understanding of women’s empowerment. To increase awareness of the cultural context, the researcher conducted pre-observations in the physical setting of a madrasa before engaging in the research.

This study also controlled for measurement bias by pilot testing the questionnaire with a small group (n=2) similar to the sample used in the study. Pretesting of the instruments verified the format, language, sequence and comprehensibility of the questions to ensure that they were culturally appropriate. The researcher also considered cultural norms when selecting data collectors such as gender matching of research assistants to participants. Lastly, the study allowed enough time for planning, capacity building, and training of research staff.

The study used concurrent transformative mixed method design to accomplish its research goals. For instance, the strong emphasis on policy development for improving women’s education made this design an appropriate choice. Thus, the transformative framework was a good fit for this research because it dealt with marginalized populations (women in Pakistan) and addressed specific issues of oppression and power in the Muslim community. The concurrent design provides an overall understanding of the research problem. It consisted of the researcher collecting and analysing both strands of data (qualitative and quantitative) during the same phase of the research process. Empirical researchers recommend using a transformative lens in mixed methods when researching underrepresented women throughout the world impacted by power imbalances and marginalization.
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The study used self-administered questionnaires (N=132) and in-depth interviews (n=10) with Pakistani women (age-group of 18–25 years) in Punjab, to determine how the schools of thought, reform of educational opportunities, and higher education in particular, affected women’s empowerment. Community collaboration and networking allowed access to five madrasas where participants attended school. The findings indicated variations among the schools of thought (e.g., size of a madrasa, number of students, and availability of resources), which may influence women’s education and outlook. Second, it was found that teacher training programs are an important component of reformed madrasas. Third, this study found that higher education was not the only factor in women’s empowerment. Additional data demonstrated that participants did not tolerate violence against women (92.5 per cent), were politically active (72.7 per cent), favoured delayed marriage (65.3 per cent), gained freedom to travel (93.52 per cent), performed work for some type of payment (64.7 per cent), and felt a sense of increased respectability (90 per cent). Further, the data revealed that madrasas supported students with increased knowledge of women’s rights, upward mobility, career pathways, and social supports, which are all factors in women’s empowerment.

There are no more than 150 female madrasa students studying at the highest level. For the purpose of this study, only the bachelor’s and master’s education levels have been considered because, by virtue of their seeking higher education, students are likely to have a clear idea of women’s empowerment.99

Globally, women now exceed men in obtaining higher education.\textsuperscript{100} Even in lesser developed countries in Southern Asia, the proportion of female participation in higher education is on the rise.\textsuperscript{101} In Pakistan's case, as we all know, Malala Yousafzai has become a global icon representing the struggle to increase access to education, especially for Muslim girls in Pakistan.\textsuperscript{102} As a young girl, Malala Yousafzai defied the Taliban in the Northwestern region of Pakistan and demanded that girls be allowed to receive education. In 2012, a Taliban member attempted to assassinate her on the bus home from school by shooting her in the head. She survived the attack on her life and went on to become the youngest winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014. Malala is a champion for advancing the education of women in Pakistan, although she and her family have had to leave Pakistan in order to pursue her education and ensure her family's safety.

Although the government of Pakistan recognises education as a fundamental right for all its citizens and is committed to providing education to both men and women, availability of higher education in Pakistan is ranked among the lowest in the world. Specifically, 6 per cent of the population earns a higher education degree.\textsuperscript{103} According to Annual Publication of Pakistan Education Statistics, 2016-2017, 0.956 million students were enrolled in colleges, and 1.463 million were

\textsuperscript{100} S. Marginson, “The worldwide trend to high participation higher education: Dynamics of social stratification in inclusive systems”, \textit{Higher Education}, Volume 5, Number 2, 2016, pp. 1-22.


\textsuperscript{103} S. Malik and K. Courtney, 2011, op. cit.

A. Raza, 2016, op. cit.
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in university.\textsuperscript{104} Further, the participation rate for women in school in Pakistan is generally low because specific cultural and traditional values limit educational and empowerment opportunities for girls and women.\textsuperscript{105}

It is useful to examine women’s empowerment and the role of: (a) education; (b) freedom and autonomy; (c) community and social support; and (d) individual characteristics in supporting or challenging women’s education, as demonstrated by the quantitative and the qualitative results of the present study.

Women’s empowerment focuses on issues such as disparities in politics, wealth, and education.\textsuperscript{106} Research has shown that education is the most important pathway for women’s empowerment because it increases: knowledge, bargaining power, nutrition, use of health services, employment opportunities, and other benefits.\textsuperscript{107} However, empowerment among Pakistani women remains low because they must overcome many political, cultural, and patriarchal hurdles to acquire education.

\textit{The Role of Education}- Five schools of thought influence madrasa education in Pakistan. These schools of thought define the operation of a madrasa by establishing the curriculum, developing standards, conducting examinations, and issuing

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{107} D.Y. Coleman, 2015, \textit{op. cit.}
\end{itemize}
certificates at various levels.\textsuperscript{108} The \textit{Dars-e-Nizami} is the standard curriculum of all schools of thought. The primary objective of the curriculum is to teach core subjects on Islam so that students can learn to become religious scholars.\textsuperscript{109}

\textbf{Schools of Thought- } Ethnographic research conducted by Masooda Bano in 2012 in 110 madrasas in Pakistan demonstrated the different schools of thought and their influence on madrasa education. Bano’s ethnographic research approach used four distinct methods.\textsuperscript{110}

- in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders
- group discussion
- field observations
- and self-administered surveys

The present study found that many Pakistanis, especially in the most populated province of Punjab, belonged to the Barelvi school of thought, which placed heavy emphasis on visiting shrines and venerating Sufi saints. It was also noted that the Punjab province had approximately 3,579 Barelvi madrasas, compared to only 150 Jamaat-i-Islami madrasas. The study found differences in the number of students studying at the four madrasas.\textsuperscript{111} The size of a madrasa and educational standing can have a strong bearing on women’s education and overall outlook. For example, one of the Ahl-i-Hadith schools of thought visited was the smallest, both in size and


\textsuperscript{110} Masooda Bano, 2012, op. cit.

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
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in the number of students (n=5). Additionally, this was the only madrasa that did not have desks or writing implements for the students. The other madrasas had the researcher sit on a mat on the floor, while the students sit on a mat in front of a desk before them, while conducting the interviews. Although the Ahl-i-Hadith madrasa lacked basic resources for their students, they were the only school to permit the researcher to view the Salat-al-Maghrib (prayer), which occurred just after sunset in a separate room.

The Deobandi school was the largest madrasa both in size and in the number of students. The researcher was also able to get a private tour from the head female teacher at this madrasa. This also included the teacher taking the researcher inside her home, which was located on the school campus. Additionally, the head teacher mentioned that her husband was the head teacher of the boy’s madrasa located next to the female madrasa, with a separate entrance. The teacher further explained that obtaining a job in a female madrasa was easier for women who had a husband working at the adjoining male madrasa.

This study also found variations among the four schools of thought and the teacher training programs offered at the madrasas. This study reflected a trend of increasing empowerment for students whose teachers enjoyed increased education at their madrasas. The students’ level of empowerment in this study seemed to vary, but since the schools of thought were not comparable in terms of size and educational standing, more specific conclusions could not be drawn.

Training of Teachers- Teachers are perhaps the most critical component of any system of education, and how well they teach depends on many factors. The availability of teacher training programs would be one factor. Rigorous research on
teacher training programs demonstrates that they can change the way teachers teach and, therefore, how much students learn.\textsuperscript{112}

A mixed-methods study found that teachers who received training from literacy coaches helped fourth- and fifth-grade students to achieve considerably higher quality discussions than those of classes, whose teachers were not in the program.\textsuperscript{113} Similarly, an experimental study of middle school teachers (N=2), who completed a training program on critical thinking, found that students in their classes achieved higher learning outcomes than students in classes taught by teachers who did not receive the training.\textsuperscript{114} Moreover, a case study of teachers (N=7) found that teachers who received training that involved reflecting with peers on videos of their own teaching enabled them to fix problematic practices in their classrooms.\textsuperscript{115} Finally, a study conducted in 2017, on undergraduate teachers (N=31) at a medical university in Nepal on the effects of teacher training programs, found that 90.3 per cent of teachers who participated in training programs comprised of group exercises, interactive teaching sessions, daily evaluations, and presentations, enhanced their quality of teaching.\textsuperscript{116}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{112} C. Sleeter, “Toward teacher education research that informs policy”, \textit{Educational Researcher}, Volume 43, Number 3, 2014, pp. 146-153.
\item \textsuperscript{114} Y.T.C. Yang, “Cultivating critical thinkers: Exploring transfer of learning from preservice teacher training to classroom practice”, \textit{Teaching and Teacher Education}, Volume 28, Number 12, 2012, pp. 1116–1130.
\item \textsuperscript{116} N. Baral, et. al., “Effect of teachers training workshop outcomes on real classroom situations of undergraduate medical students”, \textit{Kathmandu University Medical Journal}, Volume 13, Number 2, 2017, pp. 162-166.
\end{itemize}
Thus, research has shown a clear relationship between teaching quality and learning outcomes for students.\footnote{117} This pattern persists even for developing countries. An article that examined education plans across many developing countries (N=40) found that every country had teacher training programs that enhanced teaching quality and learning outcome for students.\footnote{118} In contrast, teacher training programs for madrasas are lacking in Pakistan, because the government does not provide the financial aid needed to cover teacher training costs.\footnote{119} The quantitative results from the present study demonstrate this, because most of the madrasas did not receive government funds (78.8 per cent). Consequently, difficulty in financing at various levels in different madrasas teacher training programs, which were meant to enhance the professional skills of teachers, were reflected in student performance.

**Women’s Rights**- A recognised indicator of women’s empowerment is education. Many women in Pakistan are denied their basic right to an education. Worldwide, a number of reasons prevent women from accessing their right to an education. One of the key issues is the culture of patriarchy and the Violence against Women (VAW) that occur in South Asian countries. Pakistan is a patriarchal society where men often use violence as a tactic to exert power and control over women. The shooting of Malala Yousafzai in 2012 is an example of how the culture of patriarchy and VAW is used in Pakistan to exert control over women’s rights to access education. Similarly,


in April 2015, human rights activist Sabeen Mehmood was shot and killed and thus effectively silenced for her stance on rights in the Balochistan province. In Pakistan, all the major institutions and services, such as education, healthcare, and employment, are controlled by men. As a result of this male dominance, women continue to face obstacles in securing access to education. Even if women can access, the educational content reinforces gender stereotypes and a curriculum of hidden discrimination is perpetrated.

Previous studies have demonstrated that patriarchal societies are more likely to accept VAW. For example, Madhani and colleagues in 2017, conducted a community-based observational study of Pakistani women (N=1,325) on various types of violence. They found that approximately half of the women (47 per cent) considered physical abuse to be violence. Only a few of the women (8 per cent) believed verbal abuse to be violence, and an even smaller percentage of women (0.4 per cent) regarded sexual abuse to be violence.

Another type of violence that some women endure in Pakistan

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is intimate partner violence (IPV). For example, a quantitative study revealed that two-thirds of women from Karachi, Pakistan believed that IPV was justified if a wife did not follow her husband’s orders.\textsuperscript{123}

Based on the participants’ responses concerning the empowerment scale, the questionnaire in the present study demonstrated that 92.5 per cent of the students did not justify a husband beating his wife. It appears that the participants in this study were socialized in ways to avoid different types of VAW. Studies have shown that educated women were less likely to condone violence against them. Two studies in Bangladesh found that women’s education was the main reason for decreasing approval of IPV as well as other forms of violence in the country.\textsuperscript{124} In the present study and in some past research, education has been shown to have a significant role in decreasing VAW. VAW could be more effectively addressed by increasing access to higher education for women in South Asian countries.

\textit{Political Rights-} Violence against women in politics has not improved in Pakistan. Over the past decade, there has been a high prevalence of crimes against Pakistani women in politics. For example, the former Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, and the Punjab Minister of social welfare, Zille Huma Usman, were both assassinated in public in 2007. A study that examined the impact of crime victimisation on political participation across five continents found that individuals who are recently victimised become more politically active


\textsuperscript{124} S.R. Schuler, 2017, op. cit.
than non-victims. The quantitative data of the study showed that 96 out of the 132 students voted in elections. Therefore, it is likely that the recent high-profile cases of crimes against Pakistani women in politics motivated the students in this study to become politically active.

In contrast, in other parts of Pakistan, women are still largely excluded from politics. The constitution of Pakistan ensures political participation for women. However, traditional values and patriarchy often lead to practices that conflict with what the policies expound. For example, a study that investigated women’s empowerment in India found that patriarchal attitudes regarding the rights of women were the vital factors that hindered women’s political empowerment across South Asia. Political parties in Pakistan also play an important role in women’s empowerment. An article entitled, “All parties need to work together for women’s empowerment,” by Bilawal Bhutto noted that Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) played an important role in empowering women. PPP introduced pro-women legislation, strengthened initiatives such as the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), and working alongside NGOs that support women.

Additionally, interviews were conducted in 2015, of 14 women belonging to the Jamaat-i-Islami, a prominent Islamist political party which is committed to increasing educational and political opportunities for women while demanding

126 M. Meraj and M.B. Sadaqat, 2016, op. cit.
segregated workplaces. As one respondent put it, “we have no problems with modernity, such as education, driving, employment, etc., but we have to ensure that it fits into our own ideology”.\textsuperscript{129} The Jamaat-i-Islami also has a separate women’s wing that encourages the state to improve the status of women in Pakistani society by enhancing men’s ability to provide political, social, and economic support to women of all classes.

\textit{Status of Women}- The status of women in Pakistan is usually attributed to the ascribed gender roles that reinforce women’s inferior status in society. However, the status of Pakistani women differs significantly across classes, provinces, and the rural/urban divide. For example, Punjabi women are socially, economically, and politically better off compared to women in the other provinces, where they are marginalised and irrelevant to the functioning of mainstream society.\textsuperscript{130} Further, a rural Pakistani woman suffers more gender inequalities compared to urban women because of different socioeconomic development and tribal and feudal customs.\textsuperscript{131} For example, \textit{watta satta} (exchange marriage) is a tribal custom in which brides are traded between two clans, particularly in rural areas in Pakistan.\textsuperscript{132} In 2012, in Swat, a family married off their six-year old daughter into a rival family to settle a dispute between them. This incident represents an extreme case of tribal custom prevailing in Pakistan, but many others also exist. It was recommended that one way to reduce tribal customs and

\textsuperscript{130} C.H. Hans, 2017, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{131} M. Meraj and M.B. Sadaqat, 2016, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{132} R.N. Bhutta, et. al., “Dynamics of watta satta marriages in rural areas of southern Punjab Pakistan”, \textit{Open Journal of Social Sciences}, Volume 3, Number 12, 2015, 166-178.
their adverse effects on women’s status is the promotion of education.  

This study found that education played a role in promoting women’s status in society. The women in this study reported that education provided them with feelings of respectability both in their families and in their peer group. Ninety per cent of participants in the study felt their education produced respect. Data from the nationally representative Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (2012-2013) demonstrated that Pakistani men respected educated women because these women could contribute financially to the family and be more self-sufficient.

Many women in Pakistan are not able to earn an income because of social restrictions that inhibit their participation in the workforce. For example, pardah is a social practice of female isolation that prevents women’s movement in Muslim communities. A qualitative study investigating the socio-cultural factors affecting gender equality in the workplace among Pakistani women (N=30) revealed that the pardah system played a role in female labour force participation (FLFP). This occurred because it excluded them from the public sphere.

Freedom and Autonomy-Education is one of the most important determinants of women’s autonomy. Much of the qualitative research that focuses on women’s autonomy comes

133 Ibid.
134 M. Meraj and M.B. Sadaqat, 2016, op. cit.
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from South Asia.\textsuperscript{137} The link between education and autonomy can be explained in a number of ways, one of which is that women with less autonomy may be prevented from continuing to receive higher education.\textsuperscript{138} Research has shown that highly educated women were more autonomous because they were more likely to be employed and, as a result, have direct access to a source of income.\textsuperscript{139} Similarly, it was reported that women with less autonomy were more likely to have no education, were more likely to be unemployed, followers of Islam, and come from male-headed households.\textsuperscript{140}

Another important aspect of autonomy is freedom of movement. Pakistani society puts limits on women’s freedom to move around in public. A study that examined Pakistani women’s ability to travel while infected with HIV (N=21) found that some of the barriers which prevented movement outside the home were the system of \textit{pardah}, and the husband’s lack of support to take them to places in the community.\textsuperscript{141} Further, it is considered “shameful” in many parts of the country if women’s

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{137} G. J. Carlson, et. al., “Associations between women’s autonomy and child nutritional status: A review of the literature”, \textit{Maternal & Child Nutrition}, Volume 11, Number 4, 2015, pp. 452-482.
\item \textsuperscript{138} G. Samari and A.R. Pebley, 2015, op. cit.
\item N. Steiber et. al., “Contextualizing the education effect on women’s employment: A cross-national comparative analysis”, \textit{Journal of Marriage and Family}, Volume 78, Number 1, 2016, pp. 246-261.
\item G. Samari and A.R. Pebley, 2015, op. cit.
\item \textsuperscript{140} P. Chakraborty and A. K. Anderson, “Maternal autonomy and low birth weight in India”, \textit{Journal of Women’s Health}, Volume 20, Number 9, 2011, 1373-1382.
\item \textsuperscript{141} A. Saeed and S. Farooq, “I can’t go out: Mobility obstacles to women’s access to HIV treatment in KPK, Pakistan”, \textit{Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care}, Volume 28, Number 4, 2017, pp. 561-574.
\end{itemize}
ability to move around is not restricted. This occurs less in cities such as Islamabad, Karachi, and Lahore. The quantitative data from the study revealed that 93.52 per cent of the madrasa students could travel to places in the community, especially for school or other purposes, but they first needed permission from the male head of the family (73.54 per cent). This result agrees with additional literature that revealed that Muslim men put limits on the women’s freedom to travel in order to preserve their patriarchal power in society.

In Muslim countries, women’s freedom of movement and ability to travel is limited because they are barred from driving motor vehicles. It was illegal for women in Saudi Arabia to operate motor vehicles until September of 2017. No legal restriction exists in Pakistan, but women are socially restricted from driving motorcycles, which is the preferred mode of transportation, because most middle-lower class families cannot afford a car. There are also socially sanctioned rules that define how Pakistani women and girls must sit on a motorbike to avoid violation of female modesty. Social rules include not being able to drive a motorcycle or hold the handlebars with both hands, and sitting behind a male driver with both legs on the same side of the seat. These social sanctions on women’s ability to drive a motorcycle or ride as men do dramatically


145 P. Hoodbhoy, 2013, op. cit.
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limits their mobility as well as their choices in life (education, jobs, etc.). In these ways, the patriarchy and culture of Pakistan shape women’s behaviours.

**Social and Community Support** - Educational settings can provide women with access to social supports. The qualitative results of this study demonstrated that the madrasas were social spaces where women had:

- the ability to build relationships with other women, reducing their isolation
- a place to develop their critical mind and discuss ideas with others
- an independent sense of worth in contradistinction to their traditional second-class citizenship
- aspirations for a better future – seeing themselves as contributing members of society
- a network through which they could question their socially assigned gender roles-as more than just wives and mothers

Moreover, the support found in the madrasas can also lead to women criticising and discussing the social restrictions that hinder women’s empowerment in Pakistan. Empowerment research shows that social support can play an important role in women’s empowerment.146 Empowering education provides pro-social values and allows students to develop friendships, networks, feelings of social connectedness, respect for human rights, collaborative skills, negotiating skills, leadership skills,

and knowledge of social systems and local and global issues. A community-based observational study among women (N=1,325) in Pakistan highlighted that women tended to speak to their friends about stressful experiences (e.g., violence against them). Many women in Pakistan lack the ability to socialise with other women because they are confined to their homes. This lack of social support may explain why many Pakistani women do not have anyone to confide in, which could affect their ability to cope with issues that impact their lives.

The qualitative data in the present study, however, shows that 80 per cent of the women interviewed utilised their madrasa as a social space to seek guidance from their friends while in school. For example, one of the interviewees stated that she and the other women in the madrasa utilised each other as support mechanisms. Accordingly, the social supports found in madrasas could be used to build the power of collectivisation to change women’s lives at the individual, family, and community levels.

LOCUS OF EMPOWERMENT

This mixed methods study explored female madrasas and the role of the different schools of thought, higher education, and educational reform, in women’s empowerment in Pakistan. The study demonstrated that the female madrasas provide students with knowledge of women’s rights, political views, upward mobility, career pathways, social/community supports, and freedom/autonomy. In these ways, female madrasas, specifically at higher levels, are valuable institutions because

they provide some empowerment opportunities to Muslim women that otherwise would not exist.

Creating opportunities for higher education and ensuring gender-equitable access to women could empower future generations. Pakistan is one of the worst performing countries in the world in terms of gender inequality. Therefore, knowledge about gender equity, women’s rights, family violence, and positive coping strategies should be incorporated in madrasas for both women and men. Madrasas can play an important role in educating masses about women’s rights. Encouraging religious leaders to play a positive role in preaching Islamic values and women’s rights that strongly condemn Violence against Women, to madrasta students could be an effective instrument to bring about behaviour change in the country.

These finding and recommendations, targeted at the policy level, can enable the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan to address cultural, religious, and social values in their educational institutions. Efforts are currently underway in many madrasas in South Asia to integrate education reform. Policy changes targeting reformed madrasas should include mental health and community supports for Pakistani women. Teachers’ training would have a large social return in the development of the country. In order to enhance and encourage a better and more powerful future for Muslim women, collaborative efforts among various systems of education are required at the local, community, and international level. As an international approach, women’s empowerment should be investigated by scholars and organisations with the goal of expanding women’s equity in education, health, and well-being.