

Quarterly

Research
& News

Centre for Public Policy and Governance

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From the Director's Desk:

The Centre for Public Policy and Governance (CPPG) was established in 2007 under the direction of the visionary and transformative Rector Dr. Peter Armacost. In 2025, it has completed seventeen years of its existence. In these seventeen years, CPPG has made significant accomplishments in research, teaching, training, and advocacy in the areas of governance, civil service reform, demography, urban policy, citizens engagement, youth, electoral democracy, energy, and conflict resolution & peacebuilding including China-US rivalry, to mention a few.

Building on our initial achievements, the Centre is pursuing the following goals. Firstly, we continue to encourage and promote a culture of research that feeds into policy processes at the local, provincial, and federal levels of government. We will continue to raise awareness on social issues among citizens and elected public and non-elected public officials. ...[cont page 2](#)

Contents

From the Director's Desk	1
Interpretations and Lessons of the Gaza Genocide	3
Policy Briefs	
> Enforced Disappearance: The Need for Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Pakistan	14
> Digital Activism - A Case Study of Transgender Activism in Pakistan	18
Seminar Series	
> Qaum, Mulk, Sultanat: Citizenship and National Belonging in Pakistan	25
> China-US Relations and Its Impact on the World	27
> Is there a Chinese Developmental Peace?	28
> Developmental Challenges of Pakistan: Constraints and Choices	29
Book Review	
> War, Violence and Women's Agency in Pakistan - The Case of Swat	30
Recent Publications	33
Visitors & Activities	35
Faculty & Staff	36

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CENTRE FOR PUBLIC POLICY
AND GOVERNANCE

Our effort is to expand the listening capacity of decision-makers to achieve tangible results in improved governance, data-driven policy-making, and effective delivery of services to citizens. Secondly, the CPPG will continue to solicit and bid for projects in the broad domain of Policy Studies, Social and Behavioral Sciences to enhance policy outcomes while promoting people's ownership of these policy issues.

Thirdly, this summer, we are preparing to launch our six weeks Diploma Program on Technology and Public Policy. This is an innovative program to comprehend the changes that technology is pushing in our social relations, and impacting governance and policy making in the country. The program will be open to young adults, elderly, public servants, private sector professionals and civil society advocates.

Finally, in April 2008, the first issue of the Quarterly was published as a Think Tank arm of the CPPG. Naively our intent was that, we would publish four issues a year. In the first issue the Director wrote: *"The CPPG plans to report its activities and share ideas on shaping research, teaching and training programs through regular publication of the Quarterly"*. For all these years we have been partially successful in ensuring the publication of the Quarterly but not 'regularly'—at least two issues a year and occasionally one. Despite challenges, the quality and content of the Quarterly has shown considerable improvement over the years. Producing and securing a theoretically rigorous and evidence driven research paper is an arduous task in a country where research culture is weak. In the past decade or so, this has been further polluted by the rat race that the HEC has kindled for publication of research journals across universities. The number of academic journals of various categories has multiplied but content and quality remain discomfiting. Therefore, there is a need to monitor and evaluate the content and quality of these journals.

Despite such odds, the CPPG faculty is committed to sustain the Quarterly, improve its quality and content through soliciting articles as per its previous practice and more importantly encourage our faculty, PhD and particularly MPhil students to make their research work worthy of publication, so that it is accessible to interested scholars, policy makers, civil society advocates, media and business community/corporate sector. To this end we follow the Peer Review process.

From this year the Quarterly will be published twice a

year, the January 2025 issue is with you and next issue will come out in July 2025. Like always, we welcome and appreciate any constructive and critical feedback.

Interpretations and Lessons of the Gaza Genocide

Raheem ul Haque

The ongoing genocide in Gaza has taken off many of our blinkers since October 2023 and educated us on the realities of international affairs and the nature of power in the first quarter of the 21st century. Written on the first anniversary of October 7 and updated recently, this essay is an attempt to articulate these learnings as the author like many citizens of the world has been consumed by the barbarity of war through daily news and images, even as other conflicts continue to reign around the world.

Was October 7 a Strategic Master Stroke in the Palestinian Struggle?

The initial news of Palestinian fighters from Gaza breaking the Israeli security barrier and overwhelming Israeli security establishments around Gaza while taking around 250 hostages came as a surprise to a world which had accepted Israel dominated status quo in Palestine. Initial reaction was that the Hamas' act aimed at sabotaging the Abraham Accords. The normalization of Israeli relations with Arab countries, particularly with Saudi Arabia, would have rendered Palestinian statehood untenable and Palestinian identity effaceable. The killing of hundreds of Israelis' put Hamas' actions on the front pages internationally with Israeli partisans calling out Palestinian intransigence while Palestinian partisans highlighting it as a natural consequence to occupation and apartheid as according to Fanon, "the very same people who had it constantly drummed into them that the only language they understood was that of force, now decide to express themselves by force".

However, news of atrocities, and taking of elderly, children and women as hostages put Israel on a higher moral ground initially. As condemnations poured in from many quarters against Hamas, that governed Gaza and its militant wing, the Qassam Brigades which led the October 7 Operation Al-Aqsa Flood; the narrative of Israel's right to defend itself against Hamas, a designated terrorist organization in the West and its satellites, reached its peak. In the wake of the biggest humiliation it had suffered since its creation, Israel successfully marketed attribution of atrocities such as '40 beheaded babies' and 'mass rapes'

to Hamas, among its supporters, while publicly voicing genocide against the people of Gaza. Fast forward a year of war, Israel has delivered on all acts of genocide that its leaders had publicly avowed. But the more importance question is whether the Hamas leadership understood the consequences of their October 7 action? Were they prepared for the Israeli onslaught that has historically killed multiples of ten for every Israeli casualty? and lastly has October 7 advanced Palestinian struggle for freedom, self-determination and the right of return?

No Surprises in Israeli Actions Post October 7

While the Israeli genocidal acts in Gaza since October 7 have been eye opening for most people, those familiar with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict only see a difference in scale rather than character. The Israelis have a history of deliberately targeting Palestinian children, civilians, doctors, intellectuals, paramedics, journalists, UN staff, and humanitarian organizations even before October 7. Thus, it is important to put the current Gaza conflict in a historical context, as a de-contextualized October 7 acts as a tool for Israeli partisanship.

The Gazans had little choice except to stay in Gaza and face the genocide as Egypt would not let them cross the border and they further showed resilience in their resistance. Zionism, the founding ideology of Israel, is premised on 'a land without a people [Palestinians] for the people [Jews] without a land'. Thus, Israel has aggressively pursued land grab and ethnic cleansing because demography (ratio of Jews to Palestinians) was understood as critically important early on. Evidently, the Nakba (catastrophe) is an ongoing condition for the Palestinians, not just an event (1948), when around 750,000 Palestinians were dispossessed and exiled, of which 250,000 settled in Gaza (which then had a population of 80,000). Today, the children of these refugees make up 70% of the Gazan population. Similarly, in 1967, during the Naksa (setback), 300,000 Palestinians were expelled from inside Israel, while Gaza came under a permanent Israeli occupation.

Thus, the violence being perpetuated on Gazans is nothing new. From 1949-53, an estimated 5,000 Palestinians seeking to go back to their homes inside Israel were killed as suspected 'combatants'. In 1956 when the British and

French invaded Egypt, the Israeli military occupied Gaza for four months killing about a 1,000 Gazans. Similar massacres happened in the 1st intifada particularly in the Jabalia Refugee camp, and in the 2nd intifada, when Gaza was finally closed off from the rest of the world as a concentration camp, under Israeli control. Since the formation of Hamas government in Gaza in 2006, Israel has conducted four “mowing the lawn” operations (Cast Lead 2008-09; Pillar of Defense 2012, Protective Edge 2014, Black Belt 2019), a term coined by Israelis for periodic high-tech massacre. Palestinians have instead used rocket attacks. However, Israel has also used intense violence to Gazan non-violent civil resistance against occupation. For example, the 2018-19 Great March of Return involved civil society groups protesting peacefully and picnicking along the border with Israel. Participants were targeted by Israeli snipers leading to the killing of 223 Palestinians while 122 Palestinians had their legs amputated as Israeli snipers targeted for life changing injuries. Similarly, prior to October 7, Israel had employed various tools of violence, including hunger. In 2005, when Palestinian resistance forced 7,000 Israeli settlers to leave Gaza, the settlers were controlling 25% of Gaza’s territory, 40% of its arable land along with a large share of water resources. The blockade since 2006 is but a penalty for Gazan resistance to push out the settlers. Through these tactics, Gaza has been kept on the brink of an economic catastrophe: 50% of Gazans were unemployed, 60% youth was unemployed, and 80% of the population lived off of government charity on the eve of October 7. Tragically, Gazan were kept on a humanitarian minimum diet while the Israelis even banned chocolates, potato chips, notebooks, musical instruments, children’s toys and spices to try to break the spirit of the people.

Thus, based on the above background and the humiliation suffered by Israel on October 7, an overwhelming response should have been expected. The current Gaza Genocide qualitatively fits the evolution of Zionist/Israeli actions going back almost a century which makes it important to understand Israeli culture & society with the Defense Minister, Yoav Gallant calling Palestinians sub-humans, publicly stating that there will be “no electricity, no food, no fuel, everything is closed” for Gazans, or the Prime Minister, Netanyahu who labeled Palestinians with the biblical term Amalek, who deserved to be killed inclu-

sive of their children. This led Israel to use Habsora, an AI system to identify targets in Gaza and drop 85,000 tons of explosives on the tiny enclave.

Zionism & Israeli Society

The above statement of Yoav Gallant can be understood as that of an ultra-nationalist as he was named after the October 1948 Operation Yoav, in which his father participated leading to the expulsion of 130,000 Palestinians to Gaza. Further, he is a military man who commanded the Southern Command of Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). Still, how can one explain a love and peace festival taking place within a couple of miles of the world’s largest concentration camp, or that Israel had 150,000 foreign workers while the unemployment rate among the two million Gazans was 47%. Even further, during this Genocide, only 1.5% of Israelis think that Israel is using too much fire power in Gaza, or that 47% Israelis even agree that incarcerated Palestinians can be raped.

The usual explanation points to the foundation of Israel on ethnic cleaning, based on Zionism, a secular Jewish Nationalist ideology born of mid-late 19th century whose aim was to create a Jewish homeland and state, to safeguard Jews from a millennium of European persecution, pogroms and antisemitism. Zionism comes out of the European context in the age of colonization, is practically implemented in Palestine with an existing population, and takes a peculiar form of (European) settler colonialism, with Ashkenazi (of European descent) Jews as masters and native non-Jews lowest in hierarchy. Further, Zionism is deeply linked with Western antisemitism as both advocated the separation of European Jews from the gentiles of the West, practically manifested through the military support of European states such as Poland to the Zionists in Palestine in the early 20th century or the British support to Jewish immigration into Palestine as a colonial power while at the same time legally limiting Jewish immigration into Britain. Thus, the Zionist movement was able to get preferential treatment in Palestine as against the treatment of Jews in Europe, because as Europeans Jews, they were higher than the Arabs in European colonial hierarchy.

It deserves attention that the Palestinians comprising mostly of simple village communities were of no match to

the European Zionists, as they had already been weakened after an unsuccessful revolt against British colonialism in the 1930s. However, as the native population that occupied prized land was much larger than the Jewish population, the Zionist movement became militant to take over land and political power through paramilitary groups like Irgun and Haganah, to the extent that associated terrorist group Lehi even assassinated a UN emissary (Folke Bernadotte) tasked with peace building in Palestine in 1948. Given this context, Israel is a product of a fascist ideology that uses terrorism for ethnic cleansing to fulfill its settler colonial objective.

Further, the 1948 Arab-Israeli war created insecurity among the Arab Jews, and Zionists exploited this to the point of sabotaging well integrated Mizrahi (Arab/Eastern Jewish) communities, to immigrate to Israel. Today, the Mizrahim make up almost half of the Jewish Israeli population. But, the integration of these communities into lower rungs of Israeli society was not guaranteed as their assimilation into an Israeli society dominated by Europeans had to counter class, culture and race differences; aspects that they actually shared with the dispossessed Palestinians. Winning the 1967 war helped as the Mizrahim benefited from the new land grab, got housing in new settlements, and used opportunities in the military and police for class mobility. Thus, their class interests got increasingly linked to an uncompromising Israeli control of occupied territories, moving them closer to the rightwing Likud or the religious Shas party, as peace with the Palestinians would mean a demotion in socio-economic status through possible competition in jobs and resources.

The 1967 war also transformed the outlook of Jewish orthodoxy. The orthodox tradition had earlier believed that God would bring about a messianic age - the coming of the Messiah in the land of Israel. However, with Israel taking control of the West Bank and Gaza, many orthodox Rabbis now felt that they (the humans) could expedite the coming of the Messiah leading to the flourishing of an extremist movement in Brooklyn, New York, led by Rabbi Meir Kahane. The Kahanist Movement was anti-left, anti-black, anti-diaspora (wanting all Jews to move to Israel), anti-love and anti-gentile. After inspiring Jewish nationalist activism and terrorism in the US, Kahane migrated to Israel and initiated a new far right political party which

publicly advocated for the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians as his 1981 book titled 'They Must Go' made abundantly clear, supplemented by public statements like "I was to remove Arabs from Israel because I do not want to kill them every week". After winning a seat in the Israeli Knesset, he brought legislation focusing on the non-Jews by advocating inter-marriage ban, no social security for non-Jews, demolishing Al-Aqsa to build a Jewish temple and removing all non-Jews from Jerusalem. Still, this was too extreme even for the rightwing Likud at the time and after Kahane's 1990 assassination, his inspired political parties, Kach and Kahane Chai were banned in 1994.

However, the Kahanist Movement got a boost from Kahane's assassination and has since become mainstream both in Israel as well as among the American Jewry. For example, the annual 'Salute to Israel Parade' in New York City that started in 1964 was initially funded by the World Zionist Organization with a secular outlook but is now organized by the Kahanists. The parade is now followed by a gala in the Central Park in support of the settler movement. More importantly, other than independent Kahanist political parties, the Kahanists are also the largest independent bloc within the mainstream Likud, which was initially infiltrated through the youth wing and over time, was taken over based on a publicly articulated plan. This transformation of Israeli society can be grasped from the fact that the Kahanist movement got only 1.2% of votes in 1984, while today, two Kahanist leaders from the settler movement are government ministers (Ben-Gvir & Bezalel Smotrich). Further, the Rabbi of army religious school, most education ministers, and for instance, Colonel Golan Vach who created the October 7, '40 beheaded babies' story, all come from the Kahanist stream. Kahanism today is the most vibrant social movement, which has penetrated all important sections of society, moving the overall Israeli polity to the right.

Resultantly, the present Israeli society thinks of itself as European in the sea of hostile natives who refuse to become 'civilized', is militarized, groomed in a fascist Jewish supremacist ideology, and perceives itself as the victim of history. This has taken away the society's will of self-reflection. Add to it, decades of de-humanization of Palestinians which most Israelis are a party to, owing to the predominant narrative and compulsory military ser-

vice, leading to the whole of society losing its humanity. The only difference that the rise of Kahanists has made is that while the liberal-left Zionists hid and concealed Palestinian dispossession, the Kahanists do it proudly in plain public view. Most Israelis just don't care about the Palestinians, except that they want them to disappear. This raises an important question; why has Israel been provided impunity by world powers for its actions against the Palestinians and their supporters?

Zionism in the West

Israel's support by Western powers particularly US, Germany and England who are the largest suppliers of weapons or intelligence support to Israel, makes them equally complicit in the Gaza Genocide. While the actions of Germany or other continental European countries can be understood as continued compensation for the guilt of the Holocaust where millions of Jews were killed, the continued support of 2nd World War Allies particularly the US and UK requires further exploration.

An important element of this support is White supremacy and colonialism which are an integral part of Zionism. While discussing colonized Algeria, Sartre had already defined the colonized as 'subhuman' in the eyes of the colonizer long before the Israelis publicly used it for the Palestinians. Most of the Western elite has yet to shed their colonial mindset especially the settler colonial states (US, Canada, Australia) or even the former colonial powers (UK, France, Germany). This is also in line with both the longstanding tradition of Christian Zionism, politically articulated through the powerful Christian Evangelical movement in the US, which believes in the need for a Jewish State in the Holy Land (Jerusalem) for the second coming of Christ. Christian Zionism predates Jewish Zionism and was quite prevalent among the early 20th century Anglo-Saxons, both the British and American elites who considered it as an article of faith. It was intertwined with conservative Christian antisemitism, which would have liked European Jews to have a separate state rather than being in their midst. This made it easier for Zionist leaders to lobby for a Jewish homeland in Palestine to the British, as aligned with British imperialist interests: one, it supported persecuted Jews of eastern Europe without Jewish immigration to antisemitic Britain which also risked importing Marxist Leninist ideas from the east;

two, it played into the idea of Evangelical Christianity at the base of British imperialism; and lastly, it could extend the British Empire to territories of a defunct Ottoman Empire through the support of European Jews. Still, the Jews of Britain were split on Zionism. Edwin Montagu, the only Jewish member of the British cabinet voted against the 1917 Balfour Declaration which declared Palestine as "a National Home for the Jewish people" arguing that the declaration was "anti-Semitic [and] in result will prove a rallying ground for anti-Semites in every country in the world" allowing them to dispense with their Jewish populations.

Here it is important to differentiate between Zionism, a political movement, and Judaism, a religion; as many ultraorthodox Jews are anti-Zionists, so were many Jewish revolutionaries like Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky who preferred Jewish integration within European nations, while many intellectuals like Albert Einstein or Hannah Arendt kept their distance from Israel. However, the capturing of the Jewish mind for Zionism gradually started with early 20th century European pogroms concluding with the Holocaust that shattered European Jewry. It was then Zionism, which provided a sustainable, dignified self-image beyond victimhood through the creation of Israel. The 1950s Hollywood best exemplifies the capturing of the Western mind for Zionism seen through the 1960 film *Exodus*, which cherished the formation of the Zionist state while portraying the indigenous Arabs as villains. That it came at the heels of religious dramas like *Ten Commandments* and *Ben-Hur*, it linked the Judeo-Christian religious tradition with contemporary politics. Additionally, the triumph of Israel in the 1967 war further made it into a symbol of pride for Jews, liberal or conservative, around the world. Religious schools in the US now rearranged their curricula not around religion but Israel, and thus Israel became inseparably linked to the Jewish identity even for the liberal and progressive Jews, completing the zionization of American Jewry.

Still, till the 1950s, the American state had yet to become partisan in the Israel-Palestinian affair, as it had taken a position against the Israeli, British and French invasion of Egypt in the 1956 Suez Canal conflict. Taking the cue, the Zionist lobby was reorganized and institutionalized through the creation of American Israeli Political Ac-

tion Committee (AIPAC) in the US, and Labor Friends of Israel (LFI) in the UK. Further, winning the 1967 war established the usefulness of Israel as a country which could serve US Imperialism as a high paid security guard in the Middle East, as it destroyed the main US Cold War regional foe, Arab Nationalism. This relationship further got a boost after the defection of Iran as a US satellite post the Islamic Revolution. However, both in the context of the 2003 US invasion of Iraq as well as the unconditional support for Israel in the current genocide, realist scholars have argued that US policy goes against its own interests, as these negatively impact its moral standing as well as the ruled based world order that it had created for its own benefit. Contemporarily, this can be explained by the convergence of two dominant lobbies – AIPAC & the Military Industrial Complex, in the US democratic system that is often termed as ‘one dollar one vote’ or a plutocracy where both political parties serve similar corporate interests.

The Zionist lobby as represented by AIPAC influences politicians from both political parties with Israel as the single point agenda. For example, Haim Saban, a media mogul, who has established the Saban Centre for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institute (a Democratic Party aligned thinktank), is a major donor to the Democratic Party. Similarly, late Sheldon Adelson, a casino billionaire and wife, are a major donor to the Republican party, and has established supporting institutions, with intellectuals on his foundation’s payroll. Additionally, the Kahanists have long dominated the politics of New York primarily because the orthodox Jewish community represents a critical voting bloc, with (orthodox) Rabbis greatly influencing the community’s political preferences. For instance, the Yeshiva University’s premier orthodox rabbinical seminary is ideologically aligned with Kahanism, allowing Kahanists to make deep inroads in the larger Jewish community and in the Democratic Party that dominates New York City. As both the orthodox Jewish voting bloc is critical to win in New York, and the funders of Kahanists and Democratic Party officials are the same, it explains the deep penetration of Kahanists in the Democratic party.

Additionally, donations from different Jewish billionaires who make up half of the ten richest men in the US,

to each party or candidate including Obama, Biden or Trump is contingent upon accepting AIPAC’s policy directives. But, the influence of Zionism in the American policy landscape is not limited to AIPAC or Jewish billionaires, but also includes material or ideological interests of policy operators. For example, the current Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken is co-founder of WestExec Advisors, a consultancy & lobbying firm which has had Israeli spy tech companies as its client. Additionally, both Jared Kushner’s (Trump’s son-in-law) father and Blinken’s grandfather have been Zionist donors themselves. The above stated dominance of Zionist influence explains how Trump could appoint an ambassador to Israel (David Friedman), who advocated against the two-state solution, a subscribed US position, and who headed a foundation (American Friends of Bet El Institutions), that supports illegal ultranationalist settlements in the occupied West Bank. It also explains why Biden removed Kach and Kahané Chai from the US list of terrorist organizations in 2022, allowing Netanyahu to include Kahanist leaders in his cabinet.

A somewhat similar situation exists in the UK with ‘Conservative Friends of Israel’ boasting 80% of Tory members of the 2023 parliament as members, while ‘Labour Friends of Israel’ were instrumental in taking down Jeremy Corbyn, a supporter of Palestinian rights, as leader of the Labour Party.

Asymmetry of Power & the Axis of Resistance

The axis of resistance to Israel before October 7 was limited to the Palestinians, Hezbollah and Iran. The Arab Muslim dictatorships including Egypt, Morocco; Gulf monarchies except Qatar; had been supportive of Israel while most Muslim countries who had no relations with Israel were too weak to challenge Israel beyond rhetoric lest they annoy the US, and risk becoming Iraq, Syria or Libya.

It was this asymmetry of power that had coaxed the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to give up resistance by accepting the Oslo Accords in 1994 which put 18% of West Bank under Palestinian control, 22% on joint control and 60% under Israeli control. This changed nothing on ground except increasing Zionist settlements in the West Bank, while turning the Palestinian Authority into a secu-

riety arm of Israel. Still, the lack of progress on a two-state solution, the breakdown of negotiations or non-implementation of accords, has been blamed on the Palestinian leadership, owing both to US partisanship as well as the dominance of Western media in narrative formulation. It is primarily because of this differential of power that apartheid Israel has been termed as the only democracy in the Middle East while apartheid South Africa had been considered a pariah state in the West.

It is within this frame that one needs to assess the Hamas' October 7 actions leading to the ongoing onslaught, which has resulted in 46,000+ documented deaths, half of whom are children, while scholars in Lancet, an academic journal, have estimated that the actual number of deaths till June 19, 2024 could be 186,000, almost 8% of the population. Additionally, Israeli attacks have left over 22,000 with life-changing injuries according to WHO. Still, the Gazans who have been continuously displaced, have buried their children or parents, have been taken hostage and severely tortured, and are experiencing extreme levels of hunger, but have not lost their humanity, dignity and continue to be steadfast in their struggle. In short, even in the face of genocide, the spirit of the Palestinian people has not been broken. On the contrary, the dedication of the Palestinian diaspora such as doctors who went to Gaza during the genocide, and Gazans within Gaza such as journalists who continue to cover the genocide, or doctors who continue to serve their community, at the risk of being targeted by Israel, have become a symbol of steadfastness for the oppressed nations (by external or internal forces) around the world.

Similarly, Hamas has not just survived the Israeli onslaught but Al-Qassam, Al-Quds and other militant groups have dealt a blow to the IDF in terms of soldier casualties as well as equipment. In support of the Palestinians, Hezbollah kept Israel engaged in the North through a low intensity war with regular casualties on both sides, eventually transforming into a full scale Israeli onslaught on Southern Beirut and opening up of a new front into Southern Lebanon. Further, the Axis of Resistance has widened and now includes Iraqi resistance forces, and the Houthis of Yemen who have closed the Red Sea to ships journeying to or from Israel as well as supporters of Israel, while even a Western naval fleet in the Red Sea has

not been able to undo the blockade.

On the media front, the genocide in Gaza has persistently kept the Palestinian question in the limelight with every large Israeli massacre making international headlines. More importantly, the monopoly of Western media to frame the narrative has been broken as another well-resourced and established media network, Al-Jazeera has covered it 24x7, while the democratization of public sphere through social media has completely transformed both information provision and consumption. With Palestinian and resistance voices being easily accessible to everyone, the media landscape has become a part of the axis of resistance with the majority against a dominant Zionist minority.

October 7 has Changed the World Beyond Palestine

The era of Israeli **military dominance** of the Middle East is now limited to the skies. Israel may have considerably debilitated Hamas but not defeated it. Hezbollah's (& Houthis) improved arsenal of missiles has been able to bypass and target the Iron Dome, the Israeli missile defense system earlier considered impenetrable. However, Hezbollah's sharing of Israeli strategic sites publicly to call into question the Dahiya doctrine (use of overwhelming force against civilians to pressurize political leadership into obedience) and its strategic restraint (Hezbollah attacks were 1/5 of Israel & it took great care to target only military assets) to limit the war to border areas, did not work as in September 2024, Israel executed a mass terrorist attack by blowing up 3,000 pagers and walkie talkies to create disarray among Hezbollah, followed by a de-capitation strategy assassinating long time leader, Hassan Nasrullah and top military leadership suggesting Israel's deep intelligence penetration in Hezbollah's organizational structure. Still, Israel's boots on the ground in South Lebanon was met by fierce resistance as Hezbollah just like Hamas has a decentralized military structure. Similarly, Iran's public display of its military capacity as a reaction to Israel's targeting of Iranian consulate in Damascus, in which five out of seven ballistic missiles hit their intended target, was meant to lay waste Israeli deterrence based on escalation dominance (we will hit you much harder than how you hit us). Still, it did not limit Israel to assassinate Ismail Haniyeh, head of Hamas Political Bureau, in Tehran on the night of Iran's presidential

inauguration. Iran has since followed with a barrage of ballistic missiles targeting military sites while stating that ‘the phase of unilateral self-restraint has ended’. Additionally, Iraqi militant groups as well as the Houthis have also targeted Israel, with Houthis receiving an overwhelming response against their civilian infrastructure.

This suggests the following: one, Israel’s stated objectives of getting rid of Hamas and more recently of Hezbollah can’t be achieved because it has not and cannot win a ground war against these groups. Even with a blockade, Al-Qassam in Gaza can continue a war of attrition as it can still produce weapons based on an ample supply of ammunition from unexploded bombs in Gaza along with new recruits; two, Israel can use its air superiority to deal a crushing blow to civilians much like the genocide in Gaza and more recently Lebanon as it has an unlimited supply of weapons from Western countries along with political support but this has little impact on the resistance on ground; three, Israel risks a mutual destruction of civilian infrastructure if it expands the war with Iran with the caveat that Iran has a much larger land mass with greater possibility of survival; and lastly, the war on most fronts (Hezbollah, Houthi, Iraqi) is expected to drag out till a Gaza ceasefire is agreed to. In short, Israel’s former Defence Minister Moshe Dayan’s statement articulating deterrence that “Israel must be like a mad dog, too dangerous to bother” no longer holds sway as the mad dog has already been unleashed for the world to see, but it could not achieve a victory on any front.

It has become abundantly clear that Israel cannot defend itself militarily unless it is fully supported by the US and other Western allies. However, this support now comes at an exorbitant cost because of technological change as cheap drones can be used to overwhelm multibillion dollar military hardware such as the Iron Dome or an Aircraft Carrier. While the West still holds technological superiority, it can no longer match production capacity with the rest of the world including China and Russia. These limitations of US military have been made clearer as it has failed to open the Red Sea shipping route while restraining Israel from an all-out war with Iran in which the US would need to participate offensively.

As of now it appears that not just Israel but the larger West

has lost its **monopoly of narrative construction**. From early on in the genocide, the increasing reach of alternative media along with 24x7 coverage of Al-Jazeera, were able to debunk the West’s formulation of war as the ‘Israel-Hamas War’ by terming it the ‘War on Gaza’. Similarly, state and private Western media’s (eg. CNN, BBC, New York Times & Washington Post etc.) sponsored promotion of ‘40 Beheaded Babies’ and ‘Mass Rapes’ concocted stories of October 7 meant for forming public opinion for the Gaza Genocide, were challenged early on by alternative media restricting greater dehumanization of Palestinians. The intentional and extent of killing of civilians by Hamas militants numbering 1,240 was called into question by investigative journalists and eventually corroborated by Israeli newspaper Haaretz, that Israel ordered the Hannibal Directive as early as 7am on October 7, obliging Israeli military to kill its own citizens so as not to allow hostage taking by Hamas. Further, about 40% of those killed were combatants while 200 Hamas fighters were unidentified. Thus, the credibility of Western legacy media lies shattered, and given its wholesale protection to state sponsored genocide, it will no longer be associated with terms like ‘independent’, ‘international’, ‘impartial’ or ‘objective’.

There has been an additional impact of social media as it has provided an insight into Israeli society. This has further horrified the world as it sees Israeli soldiers taking pleasure at killing and destroying cultural & educational heritage; Israeli citizens blocking and destroying food aid to starving Palestinians in Gaza; and Israeli media and Rabbis justifying the rape of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. Thus, Smotrich’s (Israeli Finance Minister and a Kahanist) words that Israel should act “in a way that conveys that the master of the house has gone crazy” has meant that while the Germans hid their genocide, Israel is conducting it for the whole world to see. Such is an outcome of decades of impunity but it now means that IDF as ‘the most moral army’ or ‘a defense force’, Israel as a ‘democracy practicing self-defense’, Jews as ‘victims of history’, and ‘anti-Zionism as antisemitism’ are no longer tenable in the eyes of the wider world.

Since October 7, the US has spent \$22.76bn in support of Israel’s war on Gaza, of which \$17.9bn have been in military aid to Israel, providing weapons, intelligence,

and planning & logistics support for conducting the Gaza Genocide. It has vetoed multiple UN resolutions for Gaza ceasefire; restricted funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugee (UNRWA) which is responsible for feeding Gaza; the US Congress invited and lionized Netanyahu during his speech in the Congress and introduced a bill to extend US military benefits to 20,000 Americans serving in Israeli occupation forces - IDF, while the US presidential candidates sparred on who supports Israel more. Thus, the support for genocide among the American establishment and the political elites is iron clad. However, as the US, Germany, UK, Italy and other Western states provide unqualified support to Israel to conduct the Gaza Genocide, this has led to the shedding of the Western veil through a **loss of moral credibility**, thereby creating an impetus for multi-polarity around the world along with domestic resistance.

Although the Iraq invasion at the dawn of the 21st century had clearly highlighted American imperialism, still a shortened memory had allowed the US to cloak itself in the promotion of democracy, human rights and a rule-based order. This has now been utterly exposed among the lay public because hypocrisy of the West has been on full display time after time during the last year as it has justified and supported Israel's breaking of centuries old established rules of war: conducting a genocide; targeting (Iranian) diplomatic consulate in Damascus; assassinating a chief negotiator, Ismail Haniya of Hamas; assassinating the leader of a political party, Hassan Nasrallah of Hezbollah; conducting mass terrorism through the use of technology – pagers & walkie-talkies; and conducting rapes, torture and killing of illegally incarcerated Palestinians since October 7, who number around 10,000 from the West Bank while the number of Gazans prisoners is unknown, though Israeli trucks bring decomposed bodies of Gazan prisoners from time to time.

The US state has also shown a double standard in the treatment of its own citizens (Palestinian & Turkish Americans killed by Israel vs Israeli Americans taken hostage by Hamas) in the war zone, highlighting built-in White racism that the US shares with other settler colonial states. Even citizen freedoms in the US and Europe have been quashed. The coveted freedom of expression and association has been dealt a major blow as journalists

have been targeted in the UK, conferences with Palestinian speakers have been banned in Germany, and university students and professors demanding ceasefire, boycott and divestments from Israel have been assaulted by the police on US university campuses, while the US Congress has passed a bill linking Zionism (a political ideology) with antisemitism.

However, impact of the genocide being televised on people's mobile screens for months has pushed beyond public protests into the **institutional domain**. It led South Africa to take Israel to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which accepted the argument for the presumption of genocide, ordering Israel to both prevent genocide as well as incitement to genocide. ICJ has since termed Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza as illegal. Similarly, the International Criminal Court (ICC) has issued arrest warrants against Israeli Prime Minister and Defense Minister (along with Hamas military commander) for crimes against humanity, suggesting that Israel's longstanding impunity may at last be over. Further, in May 2024, the UN General Assembly gave State of Palestine more rights & privileges by granting it a general seat while recommending its case for full membership to the UN Security Council where the US had already vetoed such a move. Consequently, in September, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution introduced by the State of Palestine to end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories by 124-14 with 43 abstaining. Europe has also not been immune to these changing dynamics as Norway, Ireland and Spain are now among the 8 out of 27 EU members who have recognized the State of Palestine, while Ireland has formally joined South Africa's genocide case against Israel at the ICJ.

The puncturing of the moral standing of the West is only hastening the movement towards a **multi-polar world** (BRICS, SCO, ASEAN etc.) along with the rise of Asian & African civilizations as a beacon of hope for humanity to tackle challenges like Climate Change rather than furthering unending wars. BRICS membership has increased to 9 countries while another 10 have applied to this Russia-China led block, which is working towards developing an alternative to US dollar as a trading currency as a beginning to eventually end US dollar hegemony. Understanding that the US has been using the ceasefire mantra

to release international pressure, while supporting Israeli game play, just like it had used the ‘peace process’ as a way for Israel to consolidate control over Palestinian territories, China has initiated diplomatic efforts to bring together Palestinian factions so as to improve their negotiating power, after it had made a diplomatic breakthrough between Iran and Saudi Arabia previously. Similarly, Russia has both advised as well as materially supported Iran through the provision of defensive equipment (surface to air missile system) against a possible Israeli attack on its strategic infrastructure. This suggests a shifting of alliances around the world, where the Axis of Resistance led by Iran is no longer condemned to marginality in a US led unipolar world, while at the same time, the fall of Syria to Turkish-US supported Islamists both reflects an over extended Axis of Resistance as well as a strategic loss of interconnectedness.

Israel’s Shaky Future & the Rise of Palestine

As the Hamas, Hezbollah and Houthi resistance stays intact, the Israeli military has publicly accepted that Hamas as an ideology cannot be beaten, while initiating a ceasefire with Hezbollah in November 2024 and Hamas in January 2025, without fulfilling its objective of destroying them. This means that: one, 120,000 displaced Israelis from the North or the Gaza envelope, who have been a burden on state exchequer, may eventually go back home but only after a sustained ceasefire; two, the reservists who have been called into service are an additional burden rather than being productive actors in the economy; three, the transshipment scope of Israeli ports has been impacted by about 70% with Eilat port closing completely, adversely impacting the economy and raising inflation; four, tourism which was one of the largest income generating industries of Israel has come to a screeching halt. Lastly, Turkey has banned exports particularly impacting cement & steel, needed for infrastructure; and additionally, Colombia, the biggest exporter of coal to Israel has stopped trading, impacting the energy sector. Thus, a long drawn-out war has had a major impact on the Israeli economy.

But, more than the \$67.6 billion in direct costs of war, downgrades in credit rating and other impacts to the economy, the war has generated a crisis of confidence among the Israelis. Many investment funds have stopped investing domestically and have instead shifted invest-

ments abroad. More importantly though, Israelis have left the country in droves, estimated to be in the hundreds of thousands (some suggest close to 500,000) thus far as many have dual passports or the highly skilled can get employment overseas with relative ease.

Thus, the important question for the long term is whether Israel will be able build bridges with the rest of the world that has now been exposed to the reality of apartheid and a genocidal Israel, while restoring domestic confidence? The horrors of Gaza will continue to make news for years: after international correspondents and citizens from around the world are able to visit and hear directly from the Palestinians; unexploded bombs go off; skeletons are found under the rubble and death toll is constantly raised; films are made; and the hanging sword of legal liabilities from the ICJ, ICC and national legal systems make their way for justice against a well-documented genocide. While the US state may be able to shelter Israel against some of the international measures in the immediate future, there is also a change in public opinion in the West with long term consequences. There have already been cracks in the hold of Zionism on the public mind in both the US and UK, represented by: one, student protests on college campuses who are demanding that their university boycott and divest from all institutions involved in the genocide including Israeli academia and firms as well as US arm manufacturers; two, public protests by Jewish groups, who are clearly separating Jewish values from Zionism by stating ‘Not in Our Name’ instead referencing the Jewish Holocaust as ‘Never Again Means Never Again for All’, while arguing that their (national & religious) identity is separate from the State of Israel; three, popular protests have had an impact on the US public imagination such that even a popular White rap artist, Macklemore with 34 million followers on Spotify has sung a resistance anthem for Gaza. Thus, while Zionist plutocracy will continue to rule the US in the near future, its loss of moral credibility and the change in public opinion among younger generations will greatly weaken political support for Zionism in the future, making apartheid Israel untenable.

The opposite has been true for the Palestinian struggle. From wanting to efface the Palestinian identity to dehumanization by terming their struggle against dispos-

session and oppression as terrorism and antisemitic, the Palestinian struggle now stands coupled with the global struggles against racism, climate crises, capitalism and empire. Though unfortunate, but the Gaza Genocide has re-humanized Palestinians in the eyes of the wider world while de-humanizing Zionist perpetrators both in Israel and the West. Similarly, the Axis of Resistance stands acknowledged as resistance, with higher moral standards in war, taking greater care to safeguard civilian loss of life rather than targeting civilians as a weapon of war. Lastly, Palestinian steadfastness in the face of genocide suggests that their resistance will continue, as epitomized by the last images of Yahya Sinwar, the head of Hamas and the mastermind of Oct 7.

For the Palestinians, while the Palestinian Authority's formal position may be a 2-State solution and Hamas had also come around to accepting the reality of Israel according to the 1967 borders in its 2017 charter, still the Palestinian aspirations are clearly for a unitary democratic state 'From the River to the Sea', where Palestinians and Jews are equal citizens. The 'Right of Return' for refugees as sanctioned by the UN Resolution 194 is deeply embedded in the Palestinian struggle, and would go a long way in acknowledging the wrongs of the past 100 years while return of the land taken away from them, can act as reparations, for peace with the Zionists. The Return Plan by Salman Abu Sitta, who has spent his life documenting Palestine, suggests that it is doable. He argues that 87% of all Israeli Jews currently live on just 12% of Palestine, while the land of ~500 (destroyed) Palestinian villages is still empty. Thus, Palestinian refugees from Gaza, West Bank, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria can easily return to their villages, which can be planned and reconstructed based on the increase in population.

In contrast, there are four options for Israel according to Mearsheimer. One, a 1-State solution which a Zionist Israel can't comprehend because it is the very negation of a Jewish State upholding the principle of Jewish supremacy. Two, a 2-State solution that Israel has worked against since the Oslo Accords and would require the removal of 750,000 settlers from the West Bank while giving up sovereignty over East Jerusalem. This runs the risk of starting a civil war because the settlers are both heavily armed as well as a great believer in their cause. Three, an Apartheid State which is the current reality on ground but would no

longer be acceptable to the larger world community. Lastly, the Ethnic Cleansing of Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank which is being tried in this war but is no longer tenable as the eyes of the world are now fixed on the situation in Palestine even if little is actually being done.

Lessons from the Gaza Genocide

The Gaza Genocide cannot alone be pinned down on Zionist hegemony but should instead be seen as a collective war by the US Empire and its satellites in support of the last European colonial project, that is critical for the West's hegemony over West Asia and North Africa. It is a hangover from the heyday of European colonialization which seamlessly meta morphed into the American Empire without coming to terms with: one, the genocide of indigenous populations in the 'new' (Americas & Australia) and the old world (Africa & Asia); and two, the institutionalization of slavery at an industrial scale meant for commodity production to serve White elite's capitalist interests, with subordinated non-Whites making up the underlying social hierarchy. As Martin Luther King Jr. stated, this has led to a civilization based on "the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism and militarism".

While the hegemony of the West with US as its pinnacle is premised on violence and social hierarchy, it is maintained through the global rules-based order (UN, WTO, IFIs, ICJ, ICC etc.). The Empire may put aside these institutions if it does not serve its interests, but others are not provided such luxury, and those who resist this formalized subordination run the risk of being termed terrorists, de-stabilized, sanctioned economically or even worse, bombed into subservience. Thus, colonialism may have formally come to an end, but most post-colonial states still function according to various levels of subordination to the West in which the local elite either extracts rents to do the Empire's bidding or ensure their own survival by not coming in its crosshairs. For example, the provision of land bridge between UAE, Saudi Arabia and Jordan to Israel to bypass the Houthi blockage; the use of post-colonial, or colonial era military bases such as the British Akrotiri base in Cyprus used for reconnaissance and intelligence gathering over Gaza and Lebanon; or the constraints on protests for Palestine in Pakistan as the country tries to avoid debt default through an IMF program.

In contrast, only in countries of the Global South which

are democracies and where de-colonization became an aspirational goal, Palestine gets deeply linked up with their own struggle. It's no surprise then that Mandela called Palestine the "most important moral issue of our time" and South Africa, rather than an Arab or a Muslim country, took concrete steps by taking a genocide case against Israel to the ICJ. Still, international affairs are mostly an outcome of comparative state interests rather than morals, ideology or ideals, and support to Palestine by the Axis of Resistance is at the expense of their own material interests which runs the risk of alienating domestic constituencies. Similarly, the lack of concrete action against the genocide by other world powers such as Russia or China could be seen as also supporting their self-interest through a diminishing American credibility. Additionally, the concentration of power even in mature democracies suggests that states are immune to demands even by large scale citizen mobilizations. Thus, the current 'democratic' order, the nation state system as well as international multilateral institutional structure, particularly the UN do not provide the confidence of restricting future genocides especially if it is perpetuated with the support of a world power.

In conclusion, the century old Palestinian struggle should be understood as the last great anti-colonial, and an anti-imperialist struggle which cannot be won without violence and sacrifice. The most recent Oct 7 flareup of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict leading to the Gaza Genocide has been instrumental in establishing Palestinian steadfastness in the face of genocide while giving the struggle a sense of righteousness through the personalized association of citizens from across the world on social media. With Israel unable to: defeat Palestinian militants in besieged Gaza or bomb Palestinian civil society into submission, the Gaza ceasefire opens a new and a much more assertive chapter in the Palestinian struggle. Although the Palestinians in Gaza as well as the West Bank will continue to live under a more belligerent Israeli occupation in the near future, still their struggle is now qualitatively different owing to a supportive global public opinion and voice, bringing Palestine closer to its aspirations for freedom and self-determination.



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Policy Briefs

Enforced Disappearance: The Need for Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Pakistan

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Introduction

This policy brief addresses the issue of Enforced Disappearance and extrajudicial killing in Pakistan. It draws the attention of the Pakistani parliament to establish a parliamentary committee to address these issues and create a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The brief follows a four-step approach: first, highlights what is the problem, second, provides its context, and third, why it is important. It then suggests policy options to the parliament of Pakistan in two folds – i.e., Priority Actions and Intermediate Actions. The Problems of Enforced Disappearance (ED) and extra-judicial killing are major issues in Pakistan. Under the umbrella of security and counterterrorism, not only militants but also law enforcement agencies in the country abduct civilians who are considered by either party as lenient towards the other party. According to Human Rights Watch, “[s]ince 2011, 8,463¹ complaints of enforced disappearances have been received by Pakistan’s Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances”.² However, activists estimate the real number to be higher. There has been limited attention given to this persistent abuse of human rights and this vital issue needs to be addressed in the country. The brief suggests that the Pakistani parliament establish a TRC on the ongoing issue of ED and extrajudicial killing in the country.

Context

Since the September 11, 2001 attacks, Pakistan has scaled up its counter terrorism efforts. In the last couple of decades, the country has not only used military operations to counter-terrorism but has also experimented with controversial peace deals with militant organizations such as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan. The law enforcement agencies of the country, under the umbrella of Counterterrorism Policies, are allegedly abducting innocent civilians, particularly from the Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces of the country.³ Furthermore, in December 2023, the Baloch Yakjehti [Unity] Committee protested against ED for over six weeks in the capital city of Pakistan.⁴ However, their demands were not even heard and instead they were harassed by the so-called ‘Unknowns’.⁵ Under the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, the Pakistani state is obliged to prevent and combat EDs, investigate allegations of disappearances, hold perpetrators accountable, and provide reparations to victims and their families.

Why Is It Important?

Establishing a TRC in Pakistan is very important. The country is faced with multifaceted challenges ranging from external threats to internal issues⁶ from political instability⁷ to economic crises⁸, terrorism and extremism⁹ to ethnic conflict¹⁰ and separatist movements.¹¹ In this context, the issue of ED can ignite further separatist movements which in turn could jeopardize the very existence of the state. In the worst-case scenario, the country could also risk losing its nuclear arsenal to terrorist organizations. It is, therefore, imperative to establish a TRC to investigate the issue of ED and extrajudicial killing in Pakistan and to prevent the serious violation of human rights in Pakistan.

¹ Human Rights Watch, 28 June. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/06/28/pakistan-court-holds-state-responsible-enforced-disappearances> (Accessed: 16 July 2023).

² P. Gossman. (2022) ‘Pakistan Court Holds State Responsible for Enforced Disappearances’, Human Rights Watch, 28 June. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/06/28/pakistan-court-holds-state-responsible-enforced-disappearances> (Accessed: 16 July 2023).

³ OHCHR (2023) ‘General Allegation 131st session (18-27 September 2023)’. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/disappearances/allegations/Pakistan-WGEID-131-GA.pdf>.

⁴ A. Ibrahim. (2024) Baloch sit-in protest continues despite freezing cold in Islamabad, Voicepk.net. Available at: <https://voicepk.net/2024/01/baloch-sit-in-protest-continues-despite-freezing-cold-in-islamabad/> (Accessed: 19 March 2024).

⁵ A. Fatima. (2023) ‘Islamabad police brutalised women and children at Baloch Yakjehti March’, Soch Fact Check, 28 December. Available at: <https://www.sochfact-check.com/ict-police-brutalised-women-and-children-at-baloch-yakjehti-march/> (Accessed: 19 March 2024).

⁶ Z.U. Malik, et al. (2021) ‘External security threat to Pakistan’, Palarch’s Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology, 18(2). Available at: <https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=external+threat+to+pakistan&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8> (Accessed: 22 April 2024).

⁷ Al Jazeera (2022) ‘No Pakistani prime minister has completed a full term in office’, Al Jazeera, 9 April. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/4/9/factbox-no-pakistani-prime-minister-has-completed-a-full-tenure> (Accessed: 22 April 2024).

⁸ S. Rana (2023) Pakistan’s Existential Economic Crisis, United States Institute of Peace. Available at: <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/04/pakistans-existential-economic-crisis> (Accessed: 22 April 2024).

⁹ Zia ur-Rehman. (2024) ‘Blasphemy Is a Crime in Pakistan. Mobs Are Delivering the Verdicts.’, The New York Times, 2 March. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/02/world/asia/pakistan-blasphemy-violence.html> (Accessed: 22 April 2024).

¹⁰ M. Kupecz. (2023) Pakistan’s Baloch Insurgency: History, Conflict Drivers, and Regional Implications, The International Affairs Review. Available at: <https://www.iar-gwu.org/print-archive/8er0x982v5pjl29srhre98ex6u8v8n> (Accessed: 22 April 2024).

¹¹ Ashik KC. (2020) ‘Rising Organized Political Violence in Balochistan: A Resurgence of Baloch Separatism?’, ACLED, 4 September. Available at: <https://acleddata.com/2020/09/04/rising-organized-political-violence-in-balochistan-a-resurgence-of-baloch-separatism/> (Accessed: 22 April 2024).

According to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, it is the right of the victim to know the truth about the circumstances and the fate of the enforced disappeared person.¹² Therefore, the aim behind the proposed TRC is “to discover, clarify, and formally acknowledge past abuses [...] and sanctioned fact-finding to establish an accurate record of [the] country’s past, [...] lift the lid of silence and denial from a contentious and painful history”. TRCs are widely recognized as a key component of transitional justice¹³, playing a crucial role in providing solace to societies grappling with conflict and shedding light on human rights abuses, thereby breaking the silence surrounding them. For example, in South Africa, it was impossible to not know about the killing and torture under apartheid but rather it was ignored. It is argued that one of the most important contributions of TRC in the case of South Africa was the removal of continuous denial.¹⁴ Despite the different mandates of South African TRC (1995–2002), the Peru TRC (2000–2003), and the Timor-Leste Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation (2002–2005), these TRCs were successful in contributing to acknowledgment/healing/reconciliation within their respective countries.¹⁵ Therefore, in the author’s view, the proposed TRC will help the communities to transition from the ongoing conflict to a peaceful society.

Policy Options

To address ED and extrajudicial killing in Pakistan, the formulation of a parliamentary committee to address the issues by establishing TRC modelled after successful initiatives in other post-conflict societies is proposed. The TRC mandate should be focused on; a) investigating human rights abuse, b) establishing truth in the country, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan province, c) developing mechanisms for compensation, and d) reconciliation between the state and citizens. This commission should provide a platform for victims and perpetrators to share their stories, uncover the truth about human rights abuses, and promote reconciliation and healing.

Priority Actions

Parliamentary Committee for TRC

To effectively address the pervasive issues of ED and extrajudicial killing in the country, it is imperative to establish a robust mechanism that can comprehensively investigate past abuses and reconcile within the affected communities. The first crucial step towards achieving this goal is to establish a Parliamentary Committee tasked with overseeing the process of setting up a TRC. The Committee should consult the affected communities for the appointment of the commissioners and ensure that they are trusted and represent the affected communities. In consultation with the affected communities, the Committee should play its role in drafting a legislative framework governing the TRC’s mandate, power, procedures, and scope by adhering to International Human Rights Standards. Further, the Committee would be also responsible for resource allocation, oversight and monitoring TRC’s activities, progress and assisting in challenges the TRC might be faced with. The Committee should also ensure the TRC’s independence in its mandate and scope.

Establishment of Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Given the nature of critical issues of ED and extrajudicial killing in conflict-affected regions such as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, the establishment of TRC is recommended. The TRC should prioritize inclusivity and ensure that members from diverse backgrounds including women; minority groups; experts in law, human rights, conflict resolution; and representatives from the affected communities. The TRC appointment must be impartial and transparent, and its members must be capable of performing independently and in a professional manner. The TRC’s primary mandate should be truth-seeking in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, where the ongoing decades of conflict have left scars on communities. The TRC must have sufficient power to work on its mandate.¹⁶

The TRC should prioritize initiatives specifically tailored to the unique context and needs of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

¹² ICCPD (2010) International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, OHCHR. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-protection-all-persons-enforced> (Accessed: 23 April 2024).

¹³ DPI (2012) ‘Obstacles and Opportunities for Transitional Justice: Truth and Reconciliation Commissions’, Democratic Progress Institute [Preprint]. Available at: <https://www.democraticprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Truth-Commissions-Paper-ENGLISH-VERSION.pdf>.

¹⁴ P.B.Hayner. (2011) *Unspeakable truths: transitional justice and the challenge of truth commissions*. Routledge. Available at: <https://eu.alma.exlibrisgroup.com/leganto/readinglist/citation/52286716810001381> (Accessed: 22 April 2024).

¹⁵ US Institute of Peace (no date) Truth Commission Digital Collection, United States Institute of Peace. Available at: <https://www.usip.org/publications/2011/03/truth-commission-digital-collection> (Accessed: 23 April 2024).

¹⁶ P. Harris & B. Reilly (eds) (1998) *Democracy and Deep-Rooted Conflict: Options for Negotiators*. International IDEA.

and Balochistan. Given the complex culture and traditions in the region, the TRC should conduct confidential hearings, collect testimonies from victims and witnesses, and document the experiences of the communities. It should especially consider local stakeholders, including community leaders and activists, to ensure participation and ownership of the truth-seeking process. For example, the Pashtun Tahafuz [Protection] Movement – a social movement in the region, could be a starting point.¹⁷ Establishing TRC and prioritizing truth-seeking would be a significant step towards acknowledging past human rights abuses and promoting reconciliation.

Investigation of Violation of Human Rights

Following its mandate, the TRC needs to prioritize investigating human rights violations. First, the TRC should create a detailed record of incidents. This must include testimonies, eyewitness accounts, and official documents to preserve evidence and ensure transparency in the truth-seeking process. The documentation can provide a factual basis for addressing past injustices and advocating for accountability. It is also crucial to establish accountability, acknowledge victims' experiences, and promote reconciliation between the Pakistani military and the affected communities.

Second, the TRC must conduct a thorough investigation into the whereabouts of victims who have been subject to ED or remain missing. Under Article 24(2) of the ICPED, it is the right of the victims to know “the fate of the enforced disappeared person”.¹⁸ Therefore, it is incumbent upon the TRC to uncover the truth about the fate of these individuals and provide closure to their families. The TRC's efforts to locate and return victims alive or facilitate the dignified return of their remains can bring solace and healing to families who have experienced profound loss and uncertainty. The TRC should collaborate with local activists and organizations to gain valuable insights and volunteers, making it more acceptable within the affected communities.

Third, the TRC must establish the identities of perpetra-

tors responsible for human rights abuses. Given the complexity of political, traditional, and ethnic relations, the TRC must document and identify the perpetrators confidentially to prevent escalation of conflict and reduce ethnic tensions. However, identifying the perpetrators will help prepare grounds for the justice process in the future.

Intermediate Actions

Developing Compensation Mechanism(s)

As part of the TRC framework, it is crucial to set up a robust mechanism for compensating victims of human rights violations, especially extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances. After documenting the truth(s) in detail, the TRC should take proactive steps to create and implement compensation mechanisms as a part of its mandate to promote truth, reconciliation, and healing. To establish an effective compensation mechanism for the victims, the TRC should work closely with relevant stakeholders, including civil society actors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and government entities. It is essential to ensure that compensation programs are comprehensive, equitable, and responsive to the needs of affected individuals and communities.

To create an effective compensation mechanism, the TRC needs to first assess and consult with the communities that have been affected. This will help them design compensation programs that are tailored to the specific needs of the victims, taking into account the complex political and socio-cultural context. Secondly, the TRC should establish transparent and clear guidelines for eligibility, application procedures, and compensation criteria. These measures must align with International Human Rights Standards and prioritize the rights and dignity of the affected communities. Further, the TRC must collaborate with government agencies to secure sustainable funding for compensation initiatives.

Reconciliation Between the Military & Victims

Reconciliation between the government (Pakistani establishment) and the affected communities is a funda-

¹⁷ M.A. Pashteen. (2019) ‘Opinion | The Military Says Pashtuns Are Traitors. We Just Want Our Rights.’, The New York Times, 11 February. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/11/opinion/pashtun-protests-pakistan.html> (Accessed: 16 February 2024).

¹⁸ ICPED (2010) International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, OHCHR. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-protection-all-persons-enforced> (Accessed: 23 April 2024).

mental objective that would contribute to healing, social cohesion, and sustainable peace. The TRC should take initiatives aimed at rebuilding trust and promoting mutual understanding between the state institutions and civil society. It can be achieved by facilitating structured dialogues, policy reforms and institutional changes, public awareness, and restorative justice initiatives that promote accountability of wrongdoing while fostering reconciliation.



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Digital Activism - A Case Study of Transgender Activism in Pakistan

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With the advancement of social media, movements and activism also started going digital, giving rise to the phenomenon of *Digital Activism*. Digital activism has provided minority and suppressed groups an opportunity to not only bring their issues to the forefront but also to mobilise themselves and demand direct action. This brief aims to highlight transgender digital activism in Pakistan by exploring how social media is utilized by transgender activists in Pakistan. Transgender people and activists in Pakistan are using different social media platforms to actively push boundaries, feel seen, demand justice, attain recognition, seek empathy and build better socio-economic opportunities for themselves. This research explores concepts and theories of the Public Sphere, New Social Movements and Resource Mobilisation to provide insights into how social media is transforming the lives of the transgender community in Pakistan. 18 interviews were conducted with members and activists of the transgender community, scholars of media studies, and professionals of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working for transgender people to formulate policy recommendations.

Context

Rapid advancement in the Information Technology (IT) sector has led to an unprecedented surge in global connectivity in the 21st century. The advent of the internet has significantly facilitated the ease and speed of information exchange. It is now feasible to publish content online from one corner of the globe and, within mere seconds, disseminate it worldwide via social media platforms and websites. This phenomenon has transformed interaction and communication dynamics among diverse communities and societies.

The decentralisation of news broadcasting through social media, along with increased accessibility of information via internet applications and websites, has revolutionised two-way communication and fostered a space for global dialogue and discourse on social issues and causes.

A prominent example of this phenomenon is the Arab Spring in 2010. Disgruntled citizens in countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, and Bahrain utilised platforms like Facebook and Twitter (now known as 'X') to mobilise and coordinate nationwide protests against their authoritarian governments, with some efforts culminating in the successful overthrow of these regimes. The pervasive use of social media for mobilization and dissemination during these events has led many researchers and commentators to describe these movements as IT revolutions or more specifically, Facebook revolutions.¹ This has given rise to digital activism.

Introduction

Digital activism or Cyber-Optimism² can be conceptualized as a form of activism that uses the internet or any sort of digital media as an avenue for mobilization. Digital activism on social media has become a powerful tool for rallying people around different causes.³ In majority of authoritarian countries, public dissent against governments does not go unnoticed and is seen as a direct attack on the state. Dissenters are either imprisoned or even killed for their challenging views. In such circumstances where protests or public gatherings are highly regulated, online mobilisation becomes more significant and effective. Significant groups that stand to benefit from social media outreach are disenfranchised segments of society, who now have an opportunity to become harbingers of change and hold institutions accountable for the injustices being carried out against them. One such group is the transgender community which faces structural challenges and is effectively using digital spaces to further their cause.

The transgender community has been denied political and socio-economic participation at par with the cisgender

community in different countries including Pakistan. Exclusion from public health care, public and private education institutions and employment opportunities offered by private companies or government institutions continue to hinder the progress of transgender people in Pakistan. They are forced to either beg on the streets, dance at private events or engage in prostitution to make ends meet, where they are subjected to severe harassment and ill-treatment. In extreme cases, they are also murdered in cold blood. In the face of such institutional and societal discrimination, the transgender community of Pakistan has struggled to organize and mobilize themselves in meaningful ways to demand their due rights and liberties.

Their voices were left unheard and their rights were usurped as they were forced to live in separate spheres. However, in the wake of continuous discrimination and police brutality, a petition was filed in the Supreme Court of Pakistan in 2009. In the case, *Muhammad Aslam Khaki v. SSP Operations Rawalpindi and others*, the Supreme Court directed provincial and federal governments to ensure that the *Khawaja Sira* (transgender women) community was granted protection under fundamental citizenship rights.⁹ This contributed to some development for the transgender community as they got entitled to National Identity Cards (CNICs) with transgender identity. Many could now cast votes as transgender and also contested elections. This landmark judgement paved the way for other discussions on transgender issues with possible policies and legislations.

In 2018, the parliament of Pakistan passed a historic Act that gave the right to self-identify regardless of the gender assigned at birth. The bill was welcomed as a great leap for the transgender community as it also recognized their

¹ Ekaterina Stepanova. "The Role of Information Communication Technologies in the "Arab Spring", Pircenter (2011). http://pircenter.org/kosdata/page_doc/p2594_2.pdf

² The belief that computer technology and the Internet will have positive effects on society.

³ Mary C. Joyce, Digital activism decoded: The new mechanics of change. IDEA, (2010).

⁴ Mirjam Edel & Maria Josua. 2018. "How Authoritarian Rulers Seek to Legitimize Repression: Framing Mass Killings in Egypt and Uzbekistan." *Democratization* 25 (5): 882–900. doi:10.1080/13510347.2018.1439021.

⁵ Zeynep Tufekci & Christopher Wilson. Social Media and the Decision to Participate in Political Protest: Observations From Tahrir Square. 62(2), 363–379. (2012) doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2012.01629.x

⁶ Cisgender: Individuals whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth. For example, someone who was assigned female at birth and identifies as a woman is cisgender.

⁷ Prostitution has no legal recognition in Pakistan. Transgender prostitutes caught by the police are tried under Section 377 of the Penal Code, which outlaws 'homosexuality'. See Muhammad Ali Awan. 'Transgender People and Human Rights Issues in Pakistan', *Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, Frankfurt/Main Germany*. (2019) <https://d-nb.info/1202848060/34>

⁸ Muni was fatally shot by 4 armed men in KP province because she was not able to provide them change for a 1000 Pakistani rupee note. See Saroop Ijaz. 'Another Transgender Woman Killed in Pakistan', *Human Rights Watch*. (2018) <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/05/08/another-transgender-woman-killed-pakistan>

⁹ ICJ. (2009) <https://www.icj.org/sogicasebook/khaki-v-rawalpindi-supreme-court-of-pakistan-12-december-2009/>.

¹⁰ Jeffrey A. Redding, "The Pakistan Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act of 2018 and its impact on the law of gender in Pakistan.", *Australian Journal of Asian Law* 20, no. 1 (2019)

rights to education, and buying or inheriting property.¹⁰ It was lauded as being even more inclusive than Transgender Laws or Bills present in the West. The Act was however later challenged by conservative groups (based on religion) in the Islamic Ideology Council.¹¹ The council issued a verdict declaring parts of the Act as against Islam. Thus, legal constraints and structural discrimination against transgender people continues to persist.

Digital Tools and the Rise of Transgender Activism

Transgender activism in Pakistan began in the mid-2000s and was initially met with public support. However, the rise of religious opposition and misinformation has led to a shift in attitudes. Social media remains a critical tool for transgender activists, allowing them to challenge false narratives, amplify their voices, and build supportive online communities. Yet, increased visibility also exposes them to targeted harassment. Figures like Maria B.¹², a famous fashion designer, can exacerbate the situation by perpetuating negative stereotypes, inciting hatred, and undermining the rights and dignity of the transgender community.

Digital tools and social media have provided transgender people the space to talk about their issues, their identity, and the challenges they face. Transgender activists in Pakistan are pushing for reforms regarding self-identification, education, medical care and job opportunities. Despite the challenges, many transgender individuals are now overcoming digital barriers, using social media to express themselves, market their skills and engage in public discourse. The objective of this research is to explore these themes.

Research Methodology

This study uses phenomenological approach to examine the lived experiences of transgender individuals and activists, focusing on social media's role in their activism. Purposive and snowball sampling were used to select participants actively engaged in social media activism,

capturing a diverse range of perspectives from a hard-to-reach population. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 18 participants from urban areas, including transgender individuals and activists, NGO representatives, and an academic, conducted either in person or via video conferencing. A thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke's six-step approach¹³ was used to identify patterns and develop a conceptual framework for understanding social media's role in transgender activism. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw, were prioritised to protect participants' rights. Key limitations included a small sample size, possible sampling bias, and the influence of the researcher's perspectives on data interpretation.

Transgender Activism vis à vis Digital Public Sphere in Pakistan

Social media's accessibility has allowed marginalized groups to advocate for social change without relying on traditional media. The transgender community in Pakistan exemplifies this, using digital platforms to challenge societal attitudes, combat discrimination, and create economic opportunities. However, this process is hindered by a lack of education and digital literacy. Many transgender individuals, abandoned or ostracised by their families, have limited access to formal education due to societal stigma.

Reclaiming and Reshaping Narratives

Before the internet, traditional media, such as newspapers and television, dominated news access and shaped public opinion. In authoritarian regimes, the media often serves as a mouthpiece for the state, while in democracies, media outlets, driven by profit, sometimes resort to sensationalism or bias. The rise of the internet disrupted traditional media's control, allowing people to access news globally. Though traditional media has adapted by using online trends, marginalized communities like Pakistan's transgender population, often criticize its coverage for ignoring or misrepresenting their struggles. As Tabu, a

¹⁰ Jeffrey A. Redding, "The Pakistan Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act of 2018 and its impact on the law of gender in Pakistan.", *Australian Journal of Asian Law* 20, no. 1 (2019)

¹¹ Nasir Iqbal. (2023) FSC strikes down transgender law for being 'against Islam'. Dawn News <https://www.dawn.com/news/1754516/fsc-strikes-down-transgender-law-for-being-against-islam>

¹² Maria B. is a famous Lahore based fashion designer, who has been at the forefront of social media hate campaigns and online vitriol against the Transgender community. She deems the prominent Transgender activists as men posing as women, who are funded to ruin the moral fabric of society by promoting homosexuality and indecency.

¹³ Virginia Braun & Victoria Clarke. (2022) "Toward Good Practice in Thematic Analysis: Avoiding Common Problems and Becoming a Knowing Researcher." *International Journal of Transgender Health* 24 (1): 1–6. doi:10.1080/26895269.2022.2129597.

transgender laborer from Lahore, shared, “We only made the news when one of us was murdered”.

While mainstream media is more willing to report on social justice issues, its sincerity remains questionable. According to Dr. Adeel Ahmad Aamir, media outlets now cover issues once they have gained significant traction online. However, Pakistan’s digital divide means that many still rely on traditional media for news. This makes good representation crucial for the transgender community, despite their uneasy relationship with traditional media. For Zareen, a transgender YouTuber, “Any publicity is good publicity”, as increased visibility forces society to recognize their humanity. By claiming space online, transgender activists have strengthened their bargaining power with traditional media, as they are no longer solely dependent on it for visibility.

The New Public Sphere & Its Usages

The concept of ‘public sphere’, first introduced by Jürgen Habermas, referred to physical spaces where individuals engaged in public discourse.¹⁴ Today, this idea extends to the digital realm, where people from diverse backgrounds connect and debate online. The digital public sphere offers an inclusive platform for activism, particularly for marginalized groups who were previously excluded from public discourse. Social media enables citizen journalism, where individuals report on issues and share content instantly, challenging traditional media’s monopoly. Mechanisms like comments and tweets create a feedback loop that ensures transparency and open discourse.

For the transgender in Pakistan, online engagement with cisgender individuals helps challenge stereotypes and dispel myths about their community. By using research-backed studies and diverging religious interpretations, they shift discussions from petty fights to fact-based arguments. Digital activism aligns with Habermas’ concept of the public sphere, fostering deliberative discourse, reshaping media representation, and promoting global solidarity for transgender rights.

Religious and Cultural Challenges

The transgender community’s increasing online visibility

has also attracted backlash, especially from conservative groups. Religious morality, which is often shaped by religious scholars like the ulema in Pakistan, plays a significant role in this opposition. Online platforms can foster freedom of expression, but they also create space for hate speech and smear campaigns, as seen in a notable controversy involving a fashion designer, Maria B., and trans activist Mehrub Moiz Awan. Maria B. launched an online campaign accusing the transgender movement of undermining Islamic values, a sentiment that resonated with many and was supported by religious hardliners.



Figure 1: Mehrub Awan’s public Instagram account after being disinvited from a TEDx event¹⁵

This campaign gained momentum in 2022 when Maria B. and her followers advocated against the Transgender Act 2018, which granted transgender individuals rights such as voting, inheritance, and the recognition of self-perceived identity. Religious conservatives, fearing that men may misuse the act to hide their homosexuality, pushed to amend it, removing provisions related to gender self-identification. The transgender community argued that these judgments were based on unfounded fears, perpetuating discrimination and transphobia.

Cultural Shifts and Global Perspectives

Transgender visibility, particularly for transgender women (*Khawaja Sira/Hijra*), has sparked debate both online and offline. Historically, the Hijra community in South Asia

¹⁴ Jürgen Habermas. “The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society.” . MIT press, (1991).

¹⁵ Mehrub Awan. <https://www.instagram.com/unrelentlesslyyours/?hl=en>

had a respected place in society, with deep ties to Sufism. However, attitudes toward transgender individuals have shifted, influenced by both local religious conservatism and imported Western transphobia. According to cultural anthropologist Leyla Jagiella, while South Asia has a long history of transgender visibility, transphobic attitudes are a more recent phenomenon, possibly imported from Western discourse.¹⁶ Globally, Islamic countries like Iran and Saudi Arabia offer contrasting approaches to transgender rights. While Iran permits and subsidizes gender reassignment surgery, Saudi Arabia has no such provisions, with transgender individuals facing significant legal and societal challenges.

Identity Assertion

The New Social Movements (NSM) theory emphasizes identity and recognition as crucial to social activism. Transgender activism in Pakistan, especially online, challenges societal norms and stereotypes by asserting the rights and recognition of transgender individuals. Digital platforms enable transgender people to express their identities, share experiences, and demand equality. New Social Movements usually rally around one particular identity but within the domain of collective identities, as some identities can overlap with one another which can give rise to intersectional subgroups. The members of these groups and subgroups aren't limited to a particular class as was the case in the early industrial social movements. Many of these movements aren't geographically bound which means that they have a wider outreach, and supporters form loosely organized networks that work asynchronously towards the cause.¹⁷

A key issue in transgender activism is the politicization of identity cards, particularly the use of "X" for gender rather than "M" or "F." The older Khawaja Siras often have cards reflecting their birth-assigned gender, since going for Hajj becomes difficult due to Saudi Arabia's non-recognition of transgender identities. The newer generation, however, pushes for self-assigned gender identities. Sunny Zia of LEAP highlights the injustice, saying, "Why is it that an already vulnerable group is being victimized

by being asked to prove their gender?"

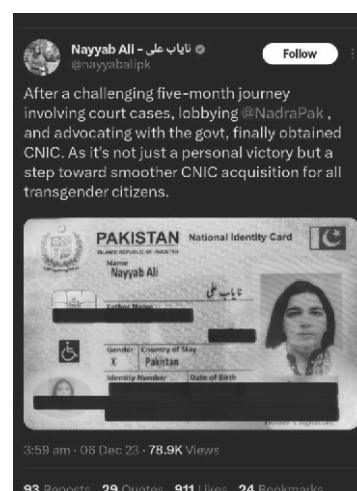


Figure 2: Nayyab Ali's X account showing her NADRA-issued Identification Card with Gender X¹⁸

Using online platforms and grassroots activism, transgender activists form a new social movement grounded in identity politics, working toward a more inclusive society.



Figure 3: Sindh Moorat March via X¹⁹

Resource Mobilization and Alliances

The LGBT community in Pakistan also faces significant challenges. Although transgender individuals are part of the LGBT acronym, the transgender community maintains a distinct identity, tied to the historical and cultural traditions of Khawaja Sira. Despite differing stances on homosexuality, the transgender community aligns with LGBT activists to form alliances that amplify their shared struggles. As Sana Khan, a transgender activist, notes,

¹⁶ Leyla Jagiella. (2023). A book talk on *Among the Eunuchs - A Muslim Transgender Journey*. *Thinkfest Lahore*.

¹⁷ Anindya Sen and Ömer Avci. "Why social movements occur: Theories of social movements." *Journal of Knowledge Economy and Knowledge Management* 11, no. 1 (2016): 125-130.

¹⁸ Nayyab Ali (2023) <https://twitter.com/nayyabalipk/status/1732172774784077824>

¹⁹ Sindh Moorat March (2023) <https://twitter.com/MooratMarch>

“We may not approve of homosexuality, but we align ourselves with the LGBT community because they raise their voices for us.”

These alliances pool local and international networks, strengthening both movements and granting legitimacy to their causes. Movements are resource-intensive, thus forming alliances is vital for a minority cause movement that cannot sustain itself independently. Resource mobilization involves securing the necessary assets to implement strategies effectively.²⁰ Thus, the entire process of gathering and organizing financial, human, and material resources to support the movement involves brokering of alliances with groups with somewhat similar struggles and collective grievances.

Digital Dilemmas: Challenges in Transgender Activism

While social media has been revolutionary for transgender activism, it also presents challenges. Transgender individuals face online harassment, bullying, and censorship. Tactics such as misgendering or revealing past identities (dead-naming) are used to invalidate transgender experiences. There are also instances of leaking sexually explicit content to publicly shame and humiliate transgender individuals.²¹ Cyberbullies often act with impunity, making digital activism emotionally taxing.

The large digital divide in Pakistan²² further complicates the issue, as many transgender individuals lack digital literacy. Those who do engage online may face aggressive questioning on complex topics like religion and biology, which opponents exploit to discredit them. Activists also face challenges in addressing religious controversies, as speaking out can be dangerous in Pakistan’s religiously charged environment.

Intra-community rivalries further complicate online activism. Some transgender individuals criticize transgender influencer activists for not representing the community as a whole, while a far-right faction within the transgender community sides with religious conservatives, attacking more progressive members. These internal divisions

weaken the broader movement.

Conclusion

Social media has had a transformative effect on the lives of transgender individuals in Pakistan. As a result of advancements in Information Technology (IT) in the 80s and 90s, the Internet became readily accessible to the masses, leading to rapid exchange of information and enhanced connectivity. This exchange wasn’t just limited to information or news, but also of ideas, thoughts, and opinions, leading social media platforms to emerge as powerful tools for activism, providing a platform for marginalized communities to amplify their voices, demand justice, and mobilize for social change. For the transgender community, digital activism was a breakthrough as they were missing from the mainstream political and social discourse, and the only time they ever got coverage on traditional media was to either shun them for their ‘immorality’ or to use their sad stories to further viewership. Social media on the other hand, has empowered transgender people and activists in Pakistan to push boundaries, demand recognition, and advocate for their rights with unprecedented reach and impact, and that too on their own accord. By sharing their stories, experiences, and perspectives on digital platforms, transgender individuals are challenging stereotypes, debunking myths, and humanizing their identities in the eyes of the public despite online harassment, censorship, and digital surveillance. This visibility is crucial for combating stigma, discrimination, and violence against transgender people and fostering greater acceptance and empathy within Pakistani society.

Further, social media facilitates networking, coalition-building, and collective action, enabling transgender individuals to connect, pool resources, and mobilize for common goals. This allows an educationally handicapped transgender community to develop partnerships with NGOs, advocacy organizations, and human rights groups, to not only amplify the impact of transgender activism but also to groom themselves, in contributing towards meaningful policy changes and demand social reforms by themselves.

²⁰ John D. McCarthy & Mayer N. Zald. “Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory.” *American Journal of Sociology* 82, no. 6 (1977): 1212–41. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2777934>.

²¹ Online Gendered Violence against trans community in Pakistan: Dolphin Ayan Khan Case. *Digital Rights Foundation*. (2024) <https://digitalrightsfoundation.pk/online-gendered-violence-against-trans-community-in-pakistan-dolphin-ayan-khan-case/>

²² Digital divide in Pakistan: Barriers to ICT adoption. *The Academic*. (2023) <https://theacademic.com/digital-divide-in-pakistan-and-ict-adoption/>

Policy Recommendations

The study offers the following recommendations:

Bridge the Digital Divide to ensure equal access to online resources, job opportunities, and education for transgender individuals, thereby empowering them digitally, particularly in downtrodden areas. Digital literacy programs should be implemented to educate and guide transgender individuals on spotting disinformation and misinformation online.

Conduct Data Collection and Analysis as these are essential for evidence-based policymaking and for identifying areas where targeted interventions are required. The government should invest in research and data collection mechanisms to gather information on the experiences, challenges, and needs of transgender individuals.

Enact Robust Data Privacy Legislation to protect the personal information of transgender individuals. Such legislation should ensure individual control over data, establish guidelines for data collection and usage, and require companies to disclose how customer data is handled and protected.

Regulate Hate Crime and Media to combat hate speech and crimes on electronic media platforms while ensuring freedom of expression and balancing it with protections against discrimination and incitement to violence. The government should enact laws that recognize transphobia as an aggravating factor for sentencing.

Pro-activate Algorithmic Audits to establish mechanisms for appeal and redressal in cases of discrimination ensuring accountability and transparency. Regularly audit automated systems to ensure compliance with anti-discrimination laws and other rights-based standards.



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Seminar Series

:Dr. Ali Usman Qasmi, Associate Professor of History and Director of Gurmani Centre for Languages and Literature at LUMS, was invited by CPPG for a book talk on his latest book titled **Qaum, Mulk, Sultanat: Citizenship and National Belonging in Pakistan** on October 8, 2024.



Qasmi began his talk with an overview of the book stating that it explored the early years of Pakistan, particularly the period between 1947 and 1956, when the country's first constitution was adopted, tracing these developments to the 1960s and post-1971, to examine how the foundational debates have shaped Pakistan's national trajectory.

Qasmi highlighted the 1950s as a vibrant and intellectually rich period in Pakistan's history, marked by debates on key issues such as federation, language, religion, and the concept of an Islamic state. These discussions, he noted, were characterized by a high quality of engagement and reflected the aspirations of a newly formed nation grappling with its identity.

A key theme of the talk was the critical role of archives in nation-building. Qasmi discussed how the Pakistani state has historically shaped a narrow national narrative centered on Two-Nation Theory and the Muslim League, often sidelining alternative histories. This selective approach, he argued, has limited opportunities to explore diverse interpretations of Pakistan's past that could offer valuable lessons for the future.

Discussing one of the chapters of his book titled Noah's Ark, he explored how citizenship was defined in the aftermath of Partition, particularly through the Citizenship Act

of 1951. Distinguishing between the concepts of “citizen” and “national,” he highlighted that while citizenship is rooted in the legal notion of equality, nationality embodies a majoritarian ethos aligned with the idea of Pakistan as a Muslim homeland. In 1947, as Hindus and Sikhs fled Pakistan out of fear and violence, many sought to return to reclaim their properties. However, Section 7 of the Citizenship Act barred individuals who had migrated from Pakistan to India after March 1947 from regaining citizenship, regardless of coercion or violence. Conversely, Muslims from India were allowed to migrate to Pakistan under the premise that they had not technically “left” Pakistan. This policy reflected the state’s prioritization of a Muslim-majority country, even though the Citizenship Act itself did not explicitly mention religion.

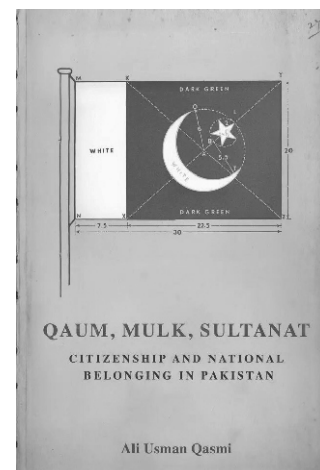
Qasmi illustrated this dynamic through cases like that of Dadanbai, a Hindu woman who was born in Sindh but moved to India with her husband after partition. But when her husband died, she wished to come back to her homeland only to face bureaucratic obstacles. Despite rare exceptions allowed by the government, such as those facilitated by Interior Minister Talpur, the bureaucracy often resisted policies allowing the return of non-Muslim migrants. By 1960, Pakistan shifted its policy to restrict further Muslim migration from India, arguing that Pakistan could no longer accommodate more migrants. Muslims in India were advised to consider India as their homeland, effectively dividing South Asia’s Muslims between the two nations. He argued that the intersection of legal citizenship and national ethos in early Pakistan, reveals how the state navigated its identity as both a Muslim homeland and a legal entity with ostensibly universal citizenship principles.

“1950s was a vibrant and intellectually rich period in Pakistan’s history, marked by debates on key issues such as federation, language, religion, and the concept of an Islamic state.”

Qasmi then elaborated on the nation-state’s efforts to stabilize meanings associated with its symbols, highlighting the importance of hegemonizing the symbolic realm to

construct a cohesive national identity. He illustrated this through the example of the Pakistani flag, where the bureaucracy occupied itself with the quest for finalizing the precise shade of green eventually choosing “BCC 26 Tartan Green” as the flag’s green color. Similarly, the material for the flag was chosen based on its durability against environmental conditions, reflecting the state’s attention to detail in defining its symbols.

This process extended to other elements of state paraphernalia, such as the national anthem and its associated imagery and sounds. By stabilizing these meanings, the state seeks to project a unified vision of Pakistan, its identity, and its interpretation of Islam. These symbols and their meanings are integral to the “sights and sounds” of the nation-state, shaping how citizens perceive and internalize their relationship with the country. Understanding this dynamic, he suggested, is crucial to analyzing the ways in which the state crafts and sustains its ideological and cultural hegemony.



Towards the end of his presentation, Qasmi emphasized that the current ideological and political chaos in Pakistan serves as a unique moment for rethinking and reimagining the nation’s future. He drew attention to the decolonial utopian vision of the 1950s, a period when possibilities seemed boundless and deeply tied to overcoming colonial legacies. Although such a vision is rarely associated with Pakistan today, he argued that retrieving this spirit of imagination could inspire new conversations about the country’s identity and aspirations for future generations. The session concluded with a lively and wide-ranging question-and-answer segment, where participants engaged with Qasmi on the implications of his research for contemporary governance and academic discourse.

:Dr. Vali Reza Nasr, Majid Khadduri Professor of International Affairs and Middle East Studies at the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Johns Hopkins University was invited to deliver a talk on **China-US Relations and Its Impact on the World** on November 15, 2024, in collaboration with the ThinkFest.



Nasr began the discussion with the recent US elections. He emphasized that Donald Trump's landslide victory and the change in leadership in the US is profoundly impactful. He noted that American voters have become increasingly cynical about the establishment, and their disillusionment was a driving force behind Trump's mandate. Donald Trump's agenda, including restrictive immigration policies, changes to citizenship rights, bureaucratic restructuring, and military purges, reflects this polarization.

He underscored an ongoing shift from globalization, driven by Trump's "America First" ideology, which seeks to reassert US supremacy on the global stage by economically undermining China. The US claims that China wants to be the top exporter in the global economy yet it does not provide access to Chinese markets. Obama administration was the first to shift the focus from the global 'war on terror' to China and as the years progressed, the US began to take a firmer stance on China. It has already adopted measures such as relocating production units, imposing tariffs, and restricting exports of high-tech goods to counter China's perceived inequitable economic practices. While these measures may appeal to the domestic voters momentarily, they risk inflating costs and fueling discontent within the US in the long term.

Nasr delineated the stark contrast between the US and China as global actors. He argued that China's global

influence is primarily economic rather than ideological or military, as was the case with the USSR. Despite its growing economic presence, China's reliance on the US dollar underscores continued US dominance of the global economic order. Further, on the question of BRICS (the interstate association of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa along with others now), he argued that while the BRICS coalition aspires to reshape the global economy, it remains decades away from realizing this ambition. He added that partnerships with China or Russia have not historically enriched their allies and **even Iran prefers** European markets instead of the Russian one. Discussing the normalization of Saudi-Iran relations, Nasr highlighted Saudi Arabia's disillusionment with the US and its pragmatic decision to ease tensions with Iran. Faced with economic and security pressures, both nations have recognized the futility of prolonged animosity. This rapprochement has the potential to reduce sectarian tensions across the Middle East and South Asia, fostering a more stable regional environment.

“China's reliance on the US dollar underscores continued US dominance of the global economic order.”

The discussion was followed by a question-answer session. Addressing Pakistan's future relationship with the U.S. under the Trump administration, Nasr remarked that foreign policy is likely to take a backseat, with Pakistan no longer being a critical focus. In contrast, India's role in the US-China rivalry positions it as a short-term alternative to Chinese production, reflecting its growing strategic importance.

:Dr. Pascal Abb, Coordinator of the Research Group Regime Competition and Senior Researcher at the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF), was invited by CPPG to deliver a webinar on *Is there a Chinese Developmental Peace?* on September 26, 2024.

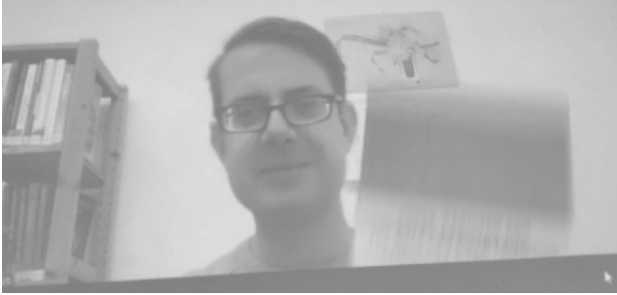


Abb started his discussion by recalling how it was a little challenging to collect data due to the Covid-19 pandemic though he was able to coordinate with local experts and academics in Pakistan. In 2022, when he was personally able to visit Pakistan, he got a chance to examine how CPEC was affecting the locals and what actually were their interests. Upon assessing the situation closely, he observed a center-periphery model in place, where powerful institutions and the central body in Islamabad were negotiating and determining the course of direction with China.

He mentioned that before the launch of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China was conscious of the political risks and economic volatility of Pakistan but keen on picking a country with which it had good relations, as a test case. Therefore, China raised the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as its flagship program. Pakistan on the other hand, was interested in the project since its former developmental partner (United States) was offering little support and through CPEC, the country had a chance to develop economically while aiming to engage in nation-building by bringing everyone on board in this nationwide project. So, what went wrong? While China was successfully able to generate nationwide energy, in reality, the country continues to face a massive energy crisis. The power plants are not working to their full capacity and thus are not profitable. Abb argued that this was because the economy was not working and the coal needed to run power plants was being imported which was no longer a viable option. On the other hand, local grievances arose, and Balochistan felt alienated as it was not receiving the

project's outcomes and benefits.

Focusing on the center-periphery problem in Pakistan and CPEC, Abb stated that there was no particular resentment against development or CPEC projects, but the allocation and distribution of resources led to tensions amongst the locals. CPEC routes became a controversial subject and the Western parts of Pakistan felt neglected, as the three suggested routes did not reflect their interests. On the matter of who got to engage with China, the centralized Planning Commission of Pakistan was involved in all high-level strategic planning, while at provincial level, Punjab was seen to enjoy a relatively privileged position as compared to other provinces. Abb commented that the formation of CPEC Authority headed by a military personnel also received criticism in Pakistan. However, the military became a crucial Chinese ally as protests and attacks on Chinese citizens and projects intensified.

Abb further remarked that China holds a non-interventionist policy. It tries to get the whole political elite on the same page to ensure that their interests are met. Although China's policy has always been very technocratic and pragmatic which does not concern itself with the will of the public, the interesting aspect is that a Chinese diplomat even interacted with Pakistani locals on social media to try to improve China's image within Pakistan, an interaction usually unheard of in the context of China.

At the conclusion of the talk, questions on various themes like political stability, security challenges, provincial alienation, and sustainability were raised by the audience. One of the members of the audience questioned China's ignorance about the fault lines in Pakistan and its role in reinforcing them, arguing that these fault lines are present in publicly accessible academic literature on Pakistan. Abb answered that to understand China's position, one must understand how China works. In China, the political and bureaucratic elites make decisions and the people in general accept and abide by those decisions. However, that is not the case in Pakistan as the centralized authorities here do not have the same level of legitimacy or command. China was disappointed by the Pakistani bureaucracy because, unlike their predictable institutions at home, they instead met with a fragmented bureaucratic structure where they had to consider the interests of multiple actors.

:Mr. Jamil Nasir, currently serving as the Chief Collector of Customs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and a graduate of Columbia University with a Masters in Economic Policy Management, was invited by CPPG to launch his book titled *Developmental Challenges of Pakistan: Constraints and Choices* on October 1, 2024.



Nasir started his talk by stating that while there is a lot of debate in Pakistan around numbers but no one bothers to decipher what lies behind those numbers, which is what motivated him to write this book. He pointed out that there is a prevalent misconception that economic growth in Pakistan has always been very low. However, the reality is that during the 1960s and 70s, Pakistan was being hailed as one of the leading economies in Asia, and it was only during the 90s that we noticed a drift and the growth saw a dip. So, what went wrong despite the reasonable growth in early years?

He postulated that the reason is lack of equity. Economic growth is not sustainable in the long term if people are alienated from the growth process. If we want to have a deeper understanding of developmental issues in a state, we must also consider factors like geography, institutions and culture of the state. He further raised a critical question regarding culture asking whether it is forward-looking or backward-looking in terms of embracing innovations.

The author then went on to elaborate key arguments in his book. Commenting on reforms, he argued that when proposing reforms, one can't expect change to occur overnight as it requires decades of steady policy planning and commitment to reforms. For instance, during the 1960s, despite having the same indicators as South Korea and the Philippines, land reforms in Pakistan were not able to

achieve the same effect as the other two countries because the proposed reforms were done half-heartedly. Nasir further commented that it has always been difficult to talk about issues related to political economy. When it comes to governance and state capacity, multiple factors impede development in Pakistan. For instance, rampant corruption leads to a sense of scarcity and promotes a culture of clientelism, trust in institutions is largely deficient, rampant tax evasion not only hinders growth but also puts an unnecessary burden on an already fragile economy. More importantly, relationships with neighboring countries are wobbly, resulting in the loss of trading opportunities.

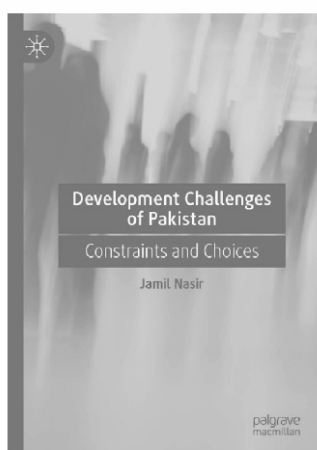
Jamil then highlighted some of the key policy choices that can help eliminate Pakistan's developmental crisis. He suggested that the government should focus on Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). This will result in far better economic outcomes than investing heavily in just a few big businesses. He was empathic in advocating that agriculture needed greater attention. He stated that earlier landowners and peasants had a shared bond, which had eroded over time. In the 1960s during the 'Green Revolution' in Pakistan, the importance of rural non-farm economy was emphasized but the initiatives taken to boost it did not trickle down to the landless peasantry. He argued that small farm initiatives can ensure that people have a greater share in the pie while improving the quality of production. Additionally, other than businesses and agriculture, education, public health, and accountability needed to be prioritized for development purposes.

“...small farm initiatives can ensure that people have a greater share in the pie while improving the quality of production.”

Commenting on economic growth and poverty, Jamil stated that poverty cannot be tackled simply through microfinance or cash transfer schemes. Empirical evidence shows that such schemes only help boost consumption but not end poverty cycles. Instead, for sustainable growth, economic reforms are essential though challenging. He argued that the government must distribute state-owned land, provide small-scale credits with low interest rates, increase wealth and inheritance tax, and ensure financial

inclusion of both genders.

The floor was then open for the question-answer session. Answering a question concerning the independence of economic system from external influences, Jamil replied that Pakistan was part of a globalized economy, which needed to increase the size of the economic pie. For this, Pakistan needs to create a conducive environment for investors and get the right person to do the right job. Answering another question regarding political instability as a challenge to developmental growth, Jamil pointed out how prophecies about Pakistan's rampant development in the 60s had failed, as a direct result of huge economic disparities leading to sociopolitical turmoil.



Book Review

War, Violence and Women's Agency in Pakistan - The Case of Swat

Javeria Tariq

The book titled *War, Violence and Women's Agency in Pakistan - The Case of Swat*, by Rehana Wagha, published under the Routledge Research on Gender in Asia Series in 2024, explores the role of women as active agents rather than passive victims in the context of war and conflict in Swat. Rehana Wagha is currently a visiting lecturer at the Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. Her teaching and interests include gendered dimensions of reconstruction and rehabilitation, gender and society, and women empowerment. To gain a detailed understanding of the pre- and post-conflict periods, the author interviewed the locals of Swat. She is among the first to depict the contrasting picture of women as active participants in the conflict, a perspective that nomadic feminists have traditionally overlooked.

The book is composed of five chapters, including an epilogue. Chapter one discusses and analyzes the popular belief of women as peacekeepers and highlights their versatile roles in perpetuating and resisting the conflict in Swat. Chapter two delves into the history of Swat, tracing the rise of Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM) and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in the valley in a narrative style that captivates the readers by exploring pre- and post-conflict eras. Chapter three analyzes the influence of culture, class, and gender through the theoretical framework of post-modern feminism. Chapter four explores the transitional period in which women are marginalized in society to becoming active participants in militancy. Chapter five discusses the role of women as victims, as well as their resilience, contributions to reconstruction, and efforts in rehabilitating society during and after the conflict.

Wagha analyzes the conflict through the lens of post-modern feminist theory. She argues that agency and structure are dynamic and mutually influential. Thus, women's agency is not only a victim of TNSM and TTP ideologies but also of prevailing culture and norms in Swat. The transition of Swat from an independent state to a territory

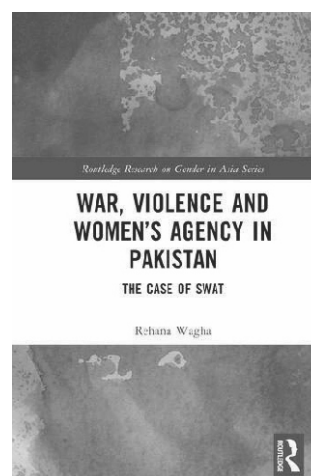
of Pakistan (merged in 1969) has also impacted women's agency. In this context, the research revolves around four questions using qualitative analysis of the data collected from women in Swat. The author offers an insightful account of the events unfolding in Swat during the rise of TNSM, and TTP's subsequent takeover of parts of the valley with a focus on the pivotal role played by local women as key contributors.

The history of Swat is analyzed in the context of its strategic position. From Ghaznavis to Kohistanis and Dilzakhs to Khans, Swat eventually became the land of Yousafzais. The religious leaders or *Mullahs* have historically played a significant role in defending against external threats and in facilitating the resolution of internal conflicts. Throughout history, Swatis have welcomed anyone who sought to safeguard Islam. The valley went through modernization under Miangul Abdul Wadood, creating a vacuum for traditional Mullahs. Further, when Swat merged with Pakistan in 1969, this resulted in many governance-related issues. The Swati men participated in the Afghan war (*Jihad*) of the 1980s, motivated and driven by the Mullahs to defend their 'brothers' against infidels. Yet, the continued underrepresentation of women and the neglect of their contributions remained unchanged.

However, the women became pivotal when the void in religious leadership was filled by Mullah Fazalullah as his active audience, through the illegal FM radio broadcasts in 2001. Under his leadership, TNSM exploited the socioeconomic and patriarchal grievances that had long been neglected, drawing women towards the organization. What made it more captivating was the fact that it was the first organization to advocate for women's rights within the framework of Islamic Shariah. It was a strategic move by TNSM to exploit women, not only to secure donations for the organization but also as manipulators shaping the ideologies of men in their households. Thus, ensuring the availability of labor and funds needed to build seminaries or mosques in the valley. The author contrasts the political landscape of Pakistan with the ideologies that prevailed in Swat in 2007 during the MMA (Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal: an association of religious conservative political parties) led government.

Wagha asserts that the social structure of Swat is deeply rooted in patriarchal norms that justify the subordination

of women through the frameworks of religion and culture. These include the traditions of *Pukhtunwali* and *Riwaj* in combination with orthodox Islam that are deeply rooted in the valley. Additionally, the social institutions of *Jirga*, *Hujra*, and *Mosque* further validate men's dominant position. Throughout history, women's participation in political, economic, and social decision-making has been consistently overlooked. The division between the public and private spheres as argued by post-modern feminists, is distinctly evident in the valley which was exploited by TNSM for its misogynistic policies.



Rehana Wagha explores the transitional period between 2005-2007 to understand the factors that contributed to the transformation of women in Swat. The women were aware of their integral role in the socioeconomic order and their contribution to production and reproduction within society. She discusses the role of Swati women in the context of the *empowerment agency* approach. Women desired to challenge the structures imposing patriarchy but struggled to find the space to express their resistance. The young women in Swat were caught in a dilemma, torn between adhering to the expectations of being good Pukhtun Muslim women and their desire to be treated as human beings. This gave Mullah Fazalullah of TNSM a golden opportunity to manipulate the women of Swat in favor of the organization. Three factors pushed women towards militancy. First, women's rights as granted by Islam. Second, economic incentives that compelled women to support militant organizations of TNSM and Taliban, as a monthly salary was credited to recruiters and supporters of militancy in addition to food and other essentials of life. The third and foremost factor was the physical secu-

rity and protection granted to families who supported the Taliban versus a threat to life if they opposed them.

Wagha asserts that, unlike other terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda or Tamil Tigers, women were not active combatants in TTP. Their role was secondary and supportive, primarily involving surveillance, manipulation, and facilitating the movement of militants through security check-posts. Here, Wagha analyzes the role of women through the lens of Bloom's 4 Rs: Revenge, Redemption, Relationship, and Respect. The Swati women perfectly embody the efforts to dismantle patriarchy, align with a religious model, while at the same time, gain recognition for their gender in society. In comparison, while the efforts and contributions of Afghan women during the Afghan Jihad were acknowledged, still the Swati women whose husbands or sons fought the *Jihad*, were indirectly the victims with unaddressed grievances. This was instead addressed by TNSM and TTP, but the reality turned out to be vastly different from what they had initially perceived. The women were unaware that they would ultimately become part of a terrorist organization.

“TNSM exploited the socioeconomic and patriarchal grievances that had long been neglected, drawing women towards the organization.”

The situation in Swat between 2007 and 2009 under Taliban rule marked one of the cruelest regimes to ever exist. Women faced heightened oppression and suppression, further diminishing their existence as human beings. This turned them against the Taliban regime, motivating them to strive for the status quo. Wagha asserts that whenever a natural or artificial catastrophe occurs, it inevitably alters the political, economic, and social structure of those affected. The 2009 military operations in Swat provided women with an opportunity to break off their confinement within the four walls of their homes and take on crucial roles in the rehabilitation, reconstruction, and resettlement efforts. She states that this opportunity was initially seized by women and only later by men. In the post-conflict period, girls and women were allowed to go to school and work with NGOs. Women began leading their families, working in fields for paid wages, and emerging as

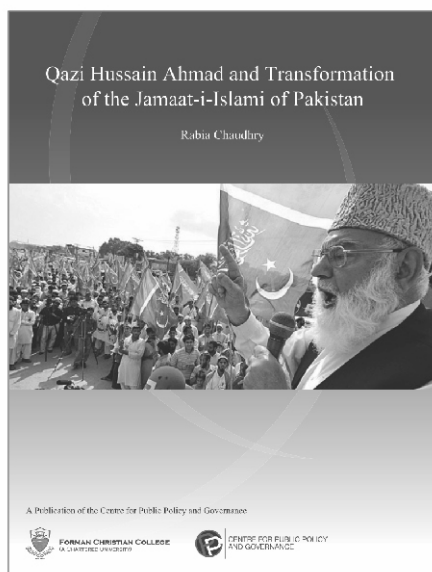
human rights defenders. However, the desired liberation and rights are still to be achieved. The fear of the Taliban still lingers in the minds of Swati women. The author emphasizes the importance of educating an entire generation and empowering women to prevent future manipulation of their agency. The engagement of religious leaders regarding the interpretation of religion and Jihad, and their role in the Jirga, is essential in promoting the inclusion of women while re-traditionalizing of structure appears to be a hindrance.

The book constitutes a significant contribution to the understanding of postmodern feminism, particularly agency and structure within the context of Swat, where patriarchal and masculine oversight prevails. The book will resonate with both ordinary readers and academics as it remains free from inflated academic writing, and thoroughly addresses the research questions. As emphasized by Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS), Wagha analyzes society's political, economic, social, and historical background to gain a deeper understanding of terrorism, and contributes to the understanding of structural violence within a society. However, the author does not examine if the wave of resistance among Swati women against patriarchy and marginalization was a historical phenomenon or a result of motivation by TNSM.



Javeria Tariq is currently enrolled in the MPhil program at CPPG

Recent Publications



Rabia Chaudhry (2024). “Qazi Hussain Ahmad and Transformation of the Jamaat-i-Islami of Pakistan (1987-2009)” *Centre for Public Policy and Governance*, Forman Christian College (A Chartered University), Lahore.

Faculty Publications

Abdullah Khoso. (2024) “Preventive practices adopted by Pakistani migrant workers in response to COVID-19 measures imposed by the Malaysian government”, *Preparing for the next pandemic- Leveraging social and human sciences for crisis response*. UNESCO. 235-242. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000391128>

Abdullah Khoso. (2024) “The Problems of Rural Youth: A Case Study on Conflict, Justice, and Resilience in Sindh, Pakistan.” Chapter 4 in Tamanna M. Shah (eds.) *Children and Youth as ‘Sites of Resistance’ in Armed Conflict*. PP- 73-90, Emerald Publishing: Leeds. <https://bookstore.emerald.com/media/preview/9781835493717-23-2.pdf>

Abdullah Khoso. (2024) “Pre-Trial Treatment of Girl Children by the Police: Three Cases from Pakistan”, Francesca Borriane and Heather J. Macpherson (eds.) *Reshaping True Crime Stories from the Global Margins: Voicing the Less Dead*. PP- 141-159, The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.: London. <https://valsec.barnesandnoble.com/w/reshaping-true-crime-stories-from-the-global-margins-francesca-borriane/1146032366>

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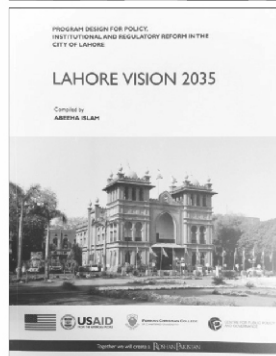
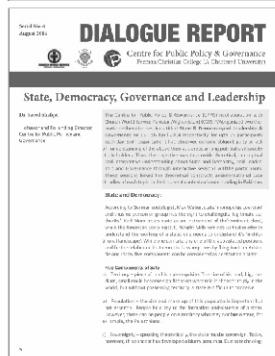
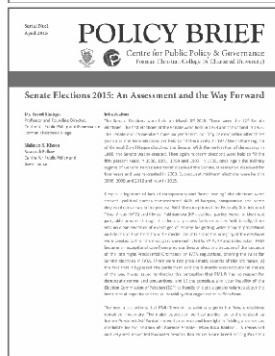
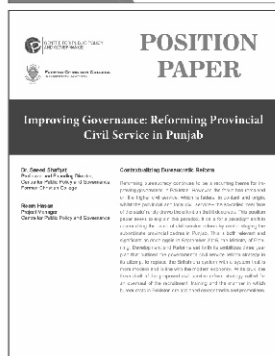
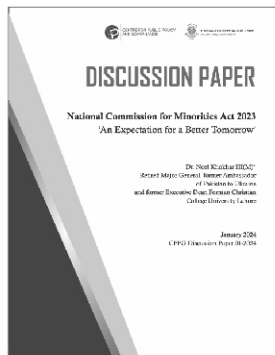
Muhammad Rovidad & Atif, M. & Nasir, S. (2024). “Analyzing minority empowerment: Statistical modeling of the plight of minorities in Peshawar, Pakistan.”, *The Journal of Research Review*, 1(4), 323–336. <https://thejrr.com/index.php/39/article/view/55>

Muhammad Rovidad & Raza, A. & Minhaj Ud Din. (2024). “Exploring the Dynamics of Remittances and their Socioeconomic Impacts on Pakistan.”, *Human Nature Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(4), 77-87. <https://doi.org/10.71016/hnjss/hz95h014>

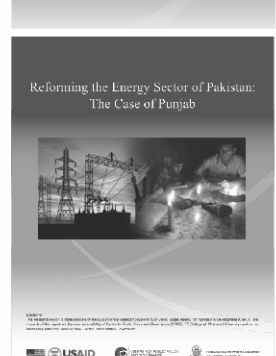
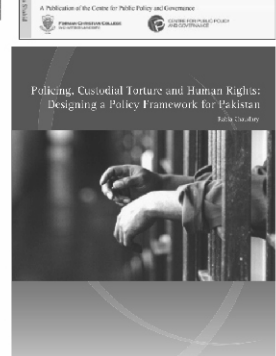
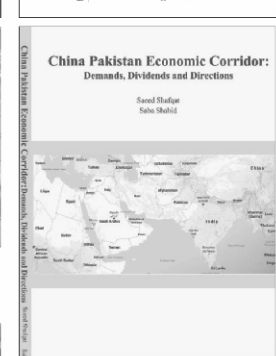
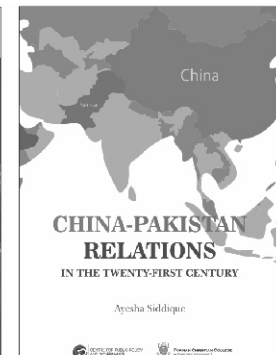
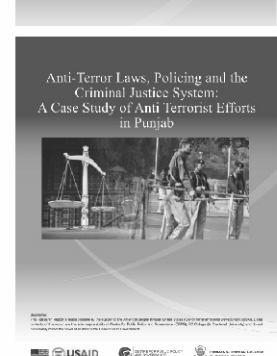
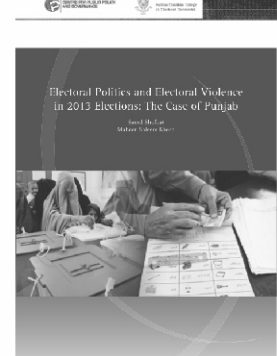
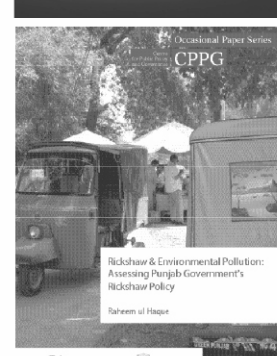
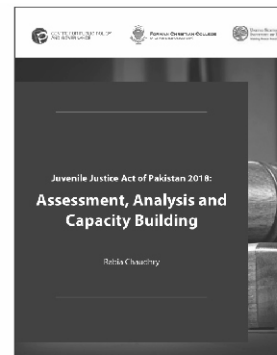
Rabia Chaudhry & Youkhana, E. (2024). “Deconstructing the climate migration myth: Assessing the impact of the 2022 floods on the movement of local populations in rural Pakistan” https://www.zef.de/fileadmin/user_upload/ZEF_Working_Paper_234_web.pdf

Rabia Chaudhry (2024). “Deconstructing the Myth of Mass Migration: Local Responses to Climate Change in Pakistan. Presented at conference Sustainable Solutions”, *Shared Futures: Development Research for the 21st Century* hosted by Center for Development Research (Zentrum für Entwicklungsforschung), University of Bonn.

CPPG's Publications



Monographs



Visitors & Activities

July 30, 2024

CPPG organized a seminar on **Research Methods and Policy Process** with Dr. Ryan Brasher, Simpson University, US. The 10th DSMCMC participants visited CPPG to attend this event.

September 2, 2024

CPPG hosted a delegation from the Punjab Institute of Management and Professional Development (PIMPD) for a lecture on **Public Policy Formulation and Implementation in Pakistan** by Dr. Saeed Shafqat.

September 12, 2024

CPPG hosted participants of the 121-NMC held by National Management College, National School of Public Policy for a discussion with Dr. Saeed Shafqat.

September 26, 2024

CPPG organized a webinar on **Is there a Chinese Developmental Peace?** with Dr. Pascal Abb, Senior Researcher at the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF).

September 30, 2024

CPPG organized the launch of a book titled **Developmental Challenges of Pakistan: Constraints and Choices** by Mr. Jamil Nasir, Chief Collector Customs, KPK.

October 8, 2024

CPPG hosted a book talk on **Qaum, Mulk, Saltanat: National Belonging in Pakistan** by Dr. Ali Usman Qasmi, Associate Professor LUMS.

October 24, 2024

CPPG organized a book talk on **Peace as Liberation: Vision and Praxis from Below** with Dr. Fatima Sajjad, Director of Centre for Critical Peace Studies, UMT.

November 13, 2024

CPPG organized a monograph launch of **Qazi Hussain Ahmad and Transformation of the Jamat-I-Islami of Pakistan** by Dr. Rabia Chaudhry, Assistant Professor CPPG.

November 15, 2024

CPPG organized a seminar on **China-US Relations and its Impact on the World** by Dr. Vali Reza Nasr, Professor

SAIS, Johns Hopkins University.

December 17, 2024

CPPG hosted the Annual Christmas Party and Alumni Reunion attended by the Rector FCC, Dr. Jonathan Addleton and US Consul General Kristin Hawkins.



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