

**Peace, Conflict and Education: An Analysis of Security Framework of Pakistan**

**Dr. Syed Amir Shah**

[amir.polscience@um.uob.edu.pk](mailto:amir.polscience@um.uob.edu.pk)

Lecturer Department of Political Sciences, University of Balochistan, Quetta.

**Dr. Muhammad Rahim**

[rahim.sociology@um.uob.edu.pk](mailto:rahim.sociology@um.uob.edu.pk)

Lecturer, Department of Sociology, University of Balochistan, Quetta

**Dr. Aurangzaib Alizai**

[aurangzaib.alizai@gmail.com](mailto:aurangzaib.alizai@gmail.com)

Assistant Professor, Department of Gender and Development Study, University of Balochistan, Quetta

**Corresponding Author: \* Dr. Syed Amir Shah** [amir.polscience@um.uob.edu.pk](mailto:amir.polscience@um.uob.edu.pk)

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**ABSTRACT**

*This paper explores the issue of peace and conflict and its multifaceted relationship with education in context of Pakistan. The research work is a qualitative content analysis of Pakistan's security policies, with a specific focus on the questions of how official policies understand the causes of the conflict, what peacebuilding measures are suggested and how is education situated with reference to these critical issues. The research is guided by the theoretical framework of 4Rs (Novelli; 2017, 2019) , which focuses on the structural drivers of the conflict and emphasizes representation, redistribution, recognition, and reconciliation as key aspects of peacebuilding. The study reveals that although the policy documents deal extensively with the said issues, however, there has been little theoretical engagement to yield any significant insights into the causes of the conflict and peacebuilding strategies. Study also highlights the lack of engagement with the literature in the field, which gives a security framework a look of a collection of essays rather than systematic effort to produce organized knowledge. The research suggests that a more theoretically informed and historically conscious approach to understand the complex phenomenon of conflict and peacebuilding is required to address the root causes of the conflict and achieve sustainable peace in Pakistan.*

**Key words:** - Peace, Conflict, Education, Security framework

**INTRODUCTION**

Education has been at the heart of the postcolonial nation-building project in Pakistan since its creation in 1947. Education provision, its institutional organization and funding, and educational content bear a profound imprint of the larger societal forces at play, most notably the crisis of national identity, civil-military tension, and struggle for autonomy between the centrist forces and those who espouse a greater autonomy for the federating units of the country. Alongside, the societal inequalities on grounds of class, gender, ethnicity, and region reflect in the development of a highly stratified system of schooling. At one end of the spectrum are the elite private schools preparing students for the International Baccalaureate and Cambridge examination system, and on the other end are more than 22 million out-of-school children of the country .

In the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist incident, the failing education system of Pakistan gained international attention. The 9/11 Commission report (2004) declared Pakistan's education system to be the breeding ground of terrorists, hence, it called for a major restructuring of the sector. In the ensuing so-called global war on terror (GWOT), supporting Pakistan's education system to combat the rising tide of

extremism became a key strategy of the war effort. However, international aid and domestic reform efforts of the education sector, particularly religious schools and girls' education were increasingly seen as a Western conspiracy to undermine Islamic values and the family system. The cooptation of education as a counter-extremism strategy in the GWOT, which was couched in the language of civilizational clash, made the educational staff and infrastructure a 'legitimate' target of Taliban's attack.

In Pakistan, at least 838 attacks on educational institutions were reported between 2009 and 2012, which is the highest number recorded worldwide (GCPEA, 2014). These include the demolition of school buildings and property, killings of school staff including teachers and students, abduction of educational staff, and forced disappearances of teachers and leaders of student bodies. In 2014, terrorists targeted an Army Public School inside Peshawar city, which left more than 142 people dead, including 138 schoolchildren and their teachers. The attack resulted in calling All-Parties Conference to develop national consensus and the subsequent adoption of the National Action Plan against terrorism in all its forms.

According to the plan, military courts were established for speedy trials of the terrorists, and moratorium on the death penalty was lifted. Government vowed to initiate radical reforms to meet the challenge of terrorism and extremism. The action plan revived the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) to frame a holistic counterterrorism and extremism strategy. The counter terrorism body produced a series of policy documents and recommendations focusing on the security challenges and strategies to eradicate the menace of terrorism. This paper investigates national security policies to understand how education has been adopted in the strategies to fight violent extremism and societal conflicts in the fragile context of Pakistan.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Education's relation with the conflict is complex and multidimensional. Literature focusing on education systems in conflict-affected contexts transcend disciplinary boundaries and borrows from a wide range of theoretical approaches. The subject primarily lies at the cross-section of Peace and Conflict Studies, Development Studies, and Comparative and International Education (CIE). This disciplinary intersectionality brings richness to the field and gives it academic rigor.

Most of the literature investigating education systems in crisis contexts can be categorized into five major thematic areas. The first thematic area focuses on the exploration of the effects of violent conflict on the education systems (Buchert, 2013; Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Davies, 2010). The second and third thematic areas investigate the role of educational institutes in promoting fragility and conflict (Barakat et al., 2008; Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Gross & Davies, 2015; Miller-Grandvaux, 2009), and rebuilding and reconstruction of schools in the post-conflict period, respectively (Milton & Barakat, 2016; Pigozzi, 1999; Smith, 2005; Winthrop, 2009). The fourth category of literature focuses on developing tools of education intervention and promoting consciousness about conflict among educational providers. This area is dominated by international organizations working in conflict settings, also known as conflict sensitive education (INEE, 2010, 2013; Paulson, 2009). The final thematic area explores how to use education to build peaceful societies (Barakat et al., 2008; Barakat et al., 2013; Davies, 2011; Smith, 2005; USAID, 2006).

In the literature, the understanding of the emergence of the conflict has also varied primarily due to conflicting ontological positions and theoretical approaches (Berdal & Malone, 2000; Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). The 'greed' oriented theories trace the origin of conflicts in the individual and understand conflicts as an outcome of individual rational actors engaged in maximizing their economic interests, particularly when large resources are at stake. This approach also influences the peacebuilding strategies and its relationship with the education system. However, the literature informed by this approach falls short of

considering the social and historical factors that enabled the conflict to emerge in the first place. Hence, there is a blind spot when it comes to the social structures which are responsible for historical injustices leading to inequalities based on ethnicity, religion, class, gender, region, sect, etc.

Additionally, the connotations of peace and peacebuilding approaches have also varied in the research literature. Literature highlights research approaches grounded in the liberal peace theory, which emphasize on the ending of hostilities as the priority. It assumes that once hostilities have ended, markets will start functioning, which is followed by some interventions like conducting general elections and introducing liberal democratic institutions. However, many scholars are critical of this understanding of peace and peacebuilding approach, which takes peace as merely an absence of violence (Galtung, 2008, 2011; Galtung & Fischer, 2013; Lederach, 1996). There has been advances in our understanding of both the forms of violence i.e., direct and indirect violence, and peace i.e., negative and positive peace (Galtung & Fischer, 2013b; Galtung & Høivik, 1971).

This study is informed by the contemporary theoretical debates about the causes of conflict and peacebuilding measures and its multifaceted relationship with the education system. It tries to answer these questions by exploring the official security policies of the state of Pakistan. The main research questions of the study are that (i) how are the causes of conflict understood in the policy documents? (ii) what peacebuilding measures are proposed and suggested by the government? and (iii) how is education integrated in the policy documents?

These issues are explored by investigating the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of each question. By using the seminal work of Johan Galtung (Galtung, 2008; Galtung & Fischer, 2013), this work locates the factors of conflict not in the individual but traces the causes of conflict in the unequal social-economic structures. Furthermore, the study is informed by the conceptual distinction between various forms of violence i.e., direct violence, cultural violence, and structural violence. Similarly, the study is also sensitive to the different forms of peace, hence, it distinguishes between negative peace and positive peace. Negative peace is understood as the absence of direct forms of violence, while the positive peace implies addressing the root causes of the conflict.

This study is specifically based on the 4R framework developed by Novelli (2017, 2019). This theoretical approach is based on the foundational work of Johan Galtung's (2008, 2011), which understands conflict as both negative and positive. The negative peace is defined as mere absence of violence, while the positive peace emphasizes the need for addressing root causes of the conflict. The 4Rs addresses the critical dimensions of justice, i.e., redistribution focuses on equitable access to economic resources and opportunities; recognition underscores the respect for cultural, ethnic, and gender identities; representation emphasizes inclusivity in the decision-making processes, while reconciliation concentrates on past grievances and fostering social cohesion.

The 4Rs framework is critical of liberal understanding of the conflict, which sees wars and armed struggles as an outcome of human greed (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). This 'economistic' approach is silent about the structural inequalities, historically accumulated grievances, and societal injustices. The 4Rs framework takes a historically informed view about the discriminatory social structures and historical injustices as root causes of the conflict rather than human greed. It also emphasizes the need to address violence in all its political, cultural, social, and economic manifestations as a necessary condition for achieving sustainable peace. Hence, the framework provides a holistic view of both the causes of conflict and the strategies of peacebuilding and offers a heuristic device to interpret the security policies of the state of Pakistan.

### **Methodology**

The research is a qualitative content analysis of the national security framework of Pakistan, which consists of documents produced by the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA), and the Ministry of Interior. In total, four security-related documents were studied, which are as follows:

|   | Document                                      | Source               |
|---|---|----------------------|
| 1 | National Internal Security Policy (2014-2018) | NACTA                |
| 2 | National Counter Extremism Guidelines (2018)  | NACTA                |
| 3 | National Internal Security Policy (2018-2023) | NACTA                |
| 4 | National Security Policy (2022-2026)          | Ministry of Interior |

The analysis of the documents was guided by the research questions, which aimed to explore the causes of conflicts, the peacebuilding measures, and the ways in which education is conceptualized with reference to conflict and peacebuilding. Initially, the documents were analyzed using open coding, which led to the emergence of themes relating to (i) policy objectives, (ii) actors in the conflict, (iii) dimensions of the conflict, (iv) causes of the conflict, (v) effects of the conflict, (vi) peacebuilding strategies, and (vii) the role of education in the conflict. After the open coding, Axial coding were used in Atlas-ti application, with the specific focus on the causes of the conflict, peacebuilding strategies, and understanding of education in relation to peace and conflict.

### **Key Findings and Analysis**

The state's security framework deals comprehensively with the policy objectives, dimensions of conflict, its causes, measures to address security challenges, and the role education plays in establishing peace and promote social cohesion. However, these dimensions are not given equal treatment. Overall, the major focus of the policy documents tends to be on the listing the causes of the conflict and suggesting remedial measures. Furthermore, the ways in which the causes of conflict are understood, and solutions suggested, are often conflicting and lacks theoretical engagement. Hence, in the absence of theoretical engagement, it is difficult to draw a 'cause and effect' relationship between the factors contributing to the conflict and the policy recommendations for establishing peace. Oftentimes, the reader gets an impression of reading a 'laundry list' of items that are responsible for the ailing security system and the steps taken to address these challenges. Following is the detailed description of how policy documents treat the three questions of (a) how conflict is understood, (b) what remedial measures are suggested, and (c) how is education situated in relations to peace and conflict in the context of Pakistan.

#### ***Causes of conflict as understood in the policy documents.***

The framework provides an array of the causes of the conflict. These can be grouped as (i) external factors, (ii) social and cultural drivers, (iii) institutional and governance challenges, (iv) socio-economic and development challenges, (v) accountability and research gap, (vi) lack of common vision, (vii) media and communication, (viii) criminal justice and penal system, and (ix) lack of social justice and equity.

#### ***External Factors contributing to the internal conflict***

The external factors identified in the security policy documents as causes of conflict in Pakistan highlight the significant role that international dynamics and cross-border influences play in the destabilization of the country. The external drivers, often compounded by regional and global geopolitics, are said to be the

major contributing factor to the internal unrest and security challenges of the country. The security framework frequently cites foreign interference as a critical cause of conflict.

The security policies emphasize that foreign interference manifests through the activities by foreign intelligence agencies and their local abettors aiming to destabilize Pakistan politically, economically, or socially. Through their links to the domestic actors, the external powers pursue their geopolitical agendas, most notably in the regions of Balochistan and former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). These agencies extend their influence through the provision of financial resources, armament, and training to anti-Pakistan groups operating within the country.

Furthermore, the security documents also emphasize ‘enemy propaganda’ as the cause of internal conflict in Pakistan. The propaganda includes the deliberate attempt to spread disinformation with the aim of eroding public trust on state institutions and exacerbating the existing socio-economic grievances. The propaganda campaigns often exploit electronic and print media platforms to further divisive narratives. The security framework highlights the instrumental role of social media to propagate misleading and false narratives against the state institutions, particularly its army.

Another external factor contributing that is said to be contributing to the internal conflict is the involvement of refugees in illicit activities. The state policies notes that Pakistan’s hospitality has not been fully honored by the millions of afghan refugees. It is reiterated in the documents that within the refugee communities, there are elements which pose security threat. Additionally, their presence has become the reason for socio-economic challenges such as promoting tension among local communities and burdening the state’s infrastructure. Furthermore, the policy documents also show concerns over the refugee camps, as they are sometimes seen as sites for the recruitment of criminals and militant groups.

Security policies stresses that the country’s internal instability is intimately tied to the external factors such as its geopolitical location. Foreign interference, propaganda of the enemy states, and the presence of large number of refugees are cited as the key external factors that contribute to the security challenges of Pakistan. And to address these challenges, the country needs to strengthen its diplomatic ties, promote regional cooperation, and install a robust system of border management to curtail external influences effectively.

### ***Socio-Cultural Drivers of the Conflict***

There is also an emphasis on the social and cultural drivers of the conflict, which includes the role of social structures, ethno-nationalist narratives, and misinformed opinions in fostering conflict within Pakistan. The documents mention ethnic division as a critical driver of conflict in the country. The fragmentation of society along ethnic and linguistic lines is often fueled by historical grievances which are accumulated over time, unequal economic development, and actual or perceived discrimination. It is often combined with other factors like exclusion of certain groups from the decision-making processes of the state and competition over the issues of political representation, control over resources, and territorial claims.

Relating to this, ‘exclusionary identity narratives’ is a prominent theme in the documents. One of the key reasons for conflict is cited as the narratives based on ethnic identity which allows to see things in ‘us versus them’ framework. Additionally, social media has enabled the reinforcement of the narrow identity constructs instead of promoting inclusive identity.



The role of madrassahs (religious seminaries) in fostering extremism also gets a prominent space in the policy framework. While many religious institutions play a positive role, some are accused of propagating intolerance and glorifying violence.

Youth alienation is mentioned several times, showing a significant concern of the policymakers. The alienation is said to have its roots in unemployment, and lack of meaningful livelihood. Youth alienation makes young people particularly vulnerable to recruitment by extremist groups, which offers decent livelihood opportunity.

### ***Institutional and Governance Challenges***

The institutional and governance challenges identified in the security policy documents highlight weaknesses in Pakistan's governing apparatus, and lack of coordination among the security agencies. This factor emerges as the leading cause of the conflict in the country and the biggest concern for the state, which undermines the state's capacity to deliver social services, address grievances effectively, and maintain law and order.

The failure of the judiciary to dispense timely and fair justice gets a notable mention in the security framework. The security framework highlights the various aspects of this failure, which includes the delays in legal proceedings, alleged corruption, and the various impediments in accessing justice. This ultimately contributes to the frustration and lack of trust on the state at large.

Another factor that gets a notable mention in the security policies is the weak governance. Weak governance refers to the inadequate capacity of state institutions while delivering services and maintaining law and order. This issue manifests more prominently in the regions of what is now described as former tribal regions. The failure of state's judicial organ has led to the development of alternative judicial system which is based on tribal code and norms. Intimately tied to the issue of weak governance is the lack of rule of law. The policy framework laments that the laws are either implemented selectively or there are different standards of justice for different groups of people.

Similarly, the state's inability to provide basic services to its citizens is cited as one of the main reasons for social conflict and state's fragility. Such as the provision of basic education and healthcare. The inadequate provision of public services exacerbates existing social inequalities and regional disparities. Furthermore, the poor infrastructure limits economic opportunities and inhibits social mobility.

However, one of the most important factors that leads to conflict is that the writ of the state has been challenged, particularly in the conflict prone regions of Balochistan and former FATA. There has been a development of a parallel structures of governance on the one hand, while on the other, insurgencies and increased crime rates has challenged the legitimacy of the state. These factors underscore the need for systemic reforms to strengthen institutional performance and governance structures.

### ***Socio-Economic and Development Drivers of conflict***

Another set of conflict drivers is underpinned by socio-economic and development factors. The deep-rooted structural inequalities and economic challenges exacerbate societal tensions, diminish social cohesion, and contribute to the grievances, which are often exploited by conflict actors. The issue is said to be further compounded due to uneven development and disparity in resource allocation between regions and provinces. The urban and rural divide is another dimension of inequality which deepens socio-economic gaps.

Unemployment is cited as another major factor that contributes to conflict according to the security framework. The policy documents highlight that how factors like the dearth of job opportunities, skills mismatch, and lack of adequate vocational training are contributing to the youth alienation. Related to the inappropriate training and lack of market-oriented skills is the issue of a flawed education system of the country. The failure of the education system is most frequently cited as a contributory factor to socio-economic disparities, which ultimately leads to social conflict. Within the education sector, the issue of access to education, poor quality of educational content, outdated curriculum design and pedagogical methods are mentioned as key factors contributing to the fragility of the state.

#### ***Accountability and Research Gaps***

The security policies acknowledge the elements of transparency, accountability, and the use of evidence-based approach to policymaking as key factors in addressing the security challenges. However, the lack of accountability is cited as a critical factor in furthering conflict and diminishing trust in public institutions. The absence of accountability results in misappropriation of public funds, rampant corruption, and poor outcome of the public projects. The judiciary's inability to hold influential individuals answerable promotes a state of anarchy and lawlessness in the country. The absence of monitoring and evaluation of policy output and outcomes allows inefficiencies and embezzlement to flourish in the system. Lack of transparency in conducting the affairs of the state also fosters perception about public institutions as opaque and unresponsive.

The dearth of social research underscores the limited role of evidence-based analysis in policy and governance. The policy framework highlights the scarce resources allocated to the research, hence, the government's inability to incorporate evidence-based policies into actionable strategies. There is also a dearth of research to understand the structural drivers of extremism, terrorism and ethno-nationalist violence.

#### ***Lack of common vision***

The lack of common vision underscores the need for an ideology which is shared by all groups of people living in the country and is cited as a factor of social disintegration. The lack of a shared national vision is considered as a profound challenge to achieve political cohesion. Without a common framework of development, the state struggles to channel its diverse population toward shared goals. The competing political visions resist national objectives, resulting in policy inconsistencies and fragile governance. Additionally, divergent narratives on identity, language, culture, and history lead to discord among social groups.

Linked to the shared vision is the issue of political participation. The security framework highlights the challenges and elements inhibiting citizens to participate in the political society as main contributory factors of the societal conflict. It reflects the exclusion of large segments of the population from meaningful involvement in political processes, particularly women, religious minorities, and people from underdeveloped regions of the country. Youth disengagement from the politics is leading them to be underrepresented in policy-making forums, and further entrench the elite interests in the country. Thus, limited participation by marginalized groups exacerbates feelings of disenfranchisement and increases the risk of conflict.

#### ***Media and Communication***

The misuse of media, particularly social media in Pakistan is recognized as a critical driver of social conflict. Social media is said to have played an instrumental role in enemy propaganda, which is framed as the dissemination of misinformation and divisive narratives by external actors to destabilize Pakistan. The misuse of media and modern communication platforms is linked to the 'external factors' mentioned

above, which aims to spread misinformation, amplify societal divisions, and undermine national integration. The policy framework also emphasize that the abuse of modern communication technologies is a part of psychological warfare, which is designed to undermine the legitimacy of the state and propagate fear among citizens and weakening national unity.

The unregulated and oftentimes unchecked media exacerbate exiting conflicts through its pursuit of sensational news, and the race for getting higher ratings by irresponsibly reporting on sensitive issues. The security framework highlights the problematic practices within media industry which often prioritizes sensationalism over unbiased reporting and enabling divisive political and social discourses to flourish. This is truer in case of social media, which is completely unregulated and has played a key role in spreading misinformation and hate speech on grounds of gender, religious sect, and ethnicity.

#### ***Criminal justice and penal system.***

The weak system of delivering justice in Pakistan is highlighted as the critical factor in exacerbating conflicts in the country. The flaws in the judicial apparatus of the state undermines the confidence on the institutions, promote recidivism, and extremism, while an effective and reformed justice system could serve as a foundation for peace and stability. In addition to delays in justice, which is often the result of over-burdened courts and slow legal processes, the prison system is also mentioned as incubator of extremism. Prisons are said to promote radicalization among the inmates due to the poorly managed facilities and lack of rehabilitation programs. After the completion of the sentence, there are no reasonable programs to reintegrate people in the society as a responsible citizen, which is coupled with the scant meaningful economic opportunities. Furthermore, the overcrowded and poor prison conditions add to the existing tensions and grievances against the state and society.

The lack of rule of law and accountability mechanisms are cited as pervasive issues, which affects all aspects of the criminal justice system. These issues manifest in the non-implementation of the laws, selective implementation of laws, and provision of impunity to the powerful individuals of the society. The criminal justice system is further compromised due to the issues of custodial violence and forced confessions extracted to law enforcement agencies.

#### ***Lack of Social Justice and Equity***

The security policies mention the lack of social justice and equity as a key factor of the conflict. It reflects as structural inequalities that undermine social cohesion and promote schism among societal groups. The lack of social justice manifests in the inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities. The unequal access to education, healthcare, and infrastructural facilities disproportionately affects the already marginalized social groups and geographical regions of the country, hence, deepening inequality. There are also systematic barriers that limit social mobility of the socially and economically disadvantaged groups. Furthermore, weak mechanism of law enforcement often favors the elite and the cost of socially disadvantaged groups.

Another dimension of social injustice is on the grounds of region. The security documents highlight the uneven development of regions and provinces as a critical factor in breeding grievances against the state, particularly in Balochistan and former FATA. In the resource allocation, the urban regions are well represented, while disenfranchising the rural communities. This becomes more problematic when uneven development overlaps with ethno-linguistic boundaries, hence, fueling the anti-state sentiments.

However, one of the most frequently cited reasons for conflict in Pakistan in the policy framework is the exclusionary identity narratives. It refers to the emphasis of identity other than the national one and making it a political cause. More specifically, it refers to the ethno-nationalist ideology which is being used to fuel secessionist movements in various regions of the country. It is highlighted in the documents



that such ideologies feed on the existing grievances of the marginalized people and aims to mobilize for breaking the country. The exclusionary identity narratives are often supported and propagated by external factors. Therefore, it is always seen as an extension of enemy propaganda albeit with the abetment of local actors.

### ***Suggested Peacebuilding Measures***

#### ***Legal and Institutional Reforms***

The security framework emphasizes the restructuring and modernization of key legal and administrative institutions to address systemic inefficiencies and challenges contributing to instability and conflict. The framework highlights a multi-pronged strategy to ensure justice and improve administration as means of conflict resolution strategy.

In this context, reforming the criminal justice system is considered as a cornerstone of Pakistan's peacebuilding strategy, aimed at addressing delays, corruption, and inefficiencies in law enforcement and judicial processes. These reforms focus on enhancing the capacity of courts, ensuring speedy trials, and strengthening the capacity of law enforcement agencies. This will ensure a robust mechanism to prosecute offenders without delay, reduce criminal activities and foster public trust on state's institutions.

Overall, the judicial reforms is the cornerstone of security policies in addressing the structural weaknesses in the system that underpin governance challenges and improve legal framework. By modernizing legal institutions and aligning legal frameworks with contemporary needs, the security policy framework suggests that it will not only enhance the state's capacity but also foster public trust in the system and be foundational in sustainable peacebuilding.

#### **Institutional Capacity Building and Enhancing Coordination**

Central to the strategy of addressing conflict and promote peacebuilding is the capacity-building and enhanced coordination among law enforcement agencies (LEAs). This factor is cited as the key element in the fight against extremism and terrorism. This includes the improvement of the operational, strategic, and collaborative capabilities of law enforcement agencies to effectively manage internal and external security challenges. Security policies emphasize the need to equip law enforcement agencies with the training and technological tools and resources necessary to perform their duties effectively.

Another prominent theme of peacebuilding mechanisms that emerges from the study of policy documents is the increased coordination among various security agencies, such as the police, paramilitary forces, intelligence agencies, and local administration. It is suggested that without a centralized and streamlined data sharing mechanism, it is difficult to achieve the peacebuilding goal in the society. Thus, investments in capacity building of law enforcement agencies and their mutual coordination are critical for sustainable peacebuilding. Well-equipped and coordinated law enforcement agencies are in better position to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts. Improved coordination among security agencies ensures a systematic response to complex internal and external security challenges, and will contribute to a peaceful and secure environment.

#### ***Socio-Economic and Development Drivers***

The security framework discusses the various ways in which the societal inequalities and uneven economic development contribute to instability and extremism. Thus, in order to foster peace and stability, government security policies emphasize the need for a targeted initiatives of development and fair distribution of resources, which will ultimately address the root causes of socio-economic grievances. To this end, various steps are suggested which are aimed at the reduction of unemployment, particularly among the youth.

The equitable distribution of state's resources will benefit the underdeveloped regions of the country, most notably the troubled regions of Balochistan and former FATA. Additionally, there has been a stress upon the need to strengthen social welfare programs to alleviate poverty and support the most vulnerable segments of society. These steps are aimed at addressing economic disparities and reducing the incentives for individuals to resort to violence and extremism.

### **Promoting Tourism and Cultural Activities**

Another strategy to promote social cohesion and reduce conflict is tourism and cultural initiatives. The policy framework mentions the development of tourist industry not only as a means of preserving cultural heritage, but with the huge potential of generating revenue. Tourism promotes inter-regional understanding, and exchange of cultural values which ultimately leads to a more tolerant society. In addition, tourism can help in countering negative perceptions of conflict-prone regions by showcasing their potential, vibrant culture, and hospitality.

### **Youth Empowerment**

The security framework underscores the importance of empowering the youth, which constitutes a significant proportion of the population. Youth is seen as having a potential for unrest as well as an asset for the progress of the country. Hence, there is an emphasis on youth empowerment through provision of marketable skills and training initiatives. These include the training programs to equip youth with the entrepreneurial skills to enable them to generate self-employment, and civic engagement opportunities. These are seen as crucial steps for youth engagement because there are also references of seeing youth bulge as a ticking bomb.

### **Refugee Reforms and Border Surveillance**

The negative socio-economic implications of the refugee population are also highlighted, hence, the need for a stringent border management system is also emphasized in the security policies. The policies ask the government to be sensitive to the issues of resource distribution among the local communities and the refugee population, as it might result in the conflict due to scarcity of economic opportunities. Furthermore, some groups of refugees are also associated with the illegal cross-border trade, therefore, the security framework recommends a proper mechanism to stop the illegal trade which results in degradation of local economy and depriving the state of revenue.

### **Social Inclusion and Rehabilitation**

The policies to promote social inclusion and rehabilitation are aimed to address the issues of societal division, ideological conflicts, and the need to reintegrate the marginalized and most vulnerable population of the country. These measures aim to foster unity, diminish social grievances, and offer an alternative way forward to those who were previously involved indoctrinated in extremist ideologies.

The policies to promote social inclusion and rehabilitation includes deradicalization programs for those people who were engaged in extremist activities or share extremist ideologies. Such programs to deradicalize the youth will provide not only psychological support like offering counseling and therapy, but also include skill development programs and education opportunities that would enable the former extremist actors to reintegrate in the society as a normal citizen.

Another peace-building strategy with a notable mention in the policy documents is to initiate dialogues with the key stakeholders of the conflict, which includes taking onboard those groups of people who can play a positive role in conflict resolution such as community elders and religious leaders. The approach based on the dialogue instead of brute force will create a conducive environment for sharing ideas and understanding conflicting and opposing ideological positions. This is considered as a key step towards

establishing a sustainable peace in the country. The security framework also recommends offering incentives to the extremist elements to shun violence and extremist activities. This can include cash rewards and job opportunities to individuals and groups that are involved in violent activities.

### ***Media and Narrative Building***

One of the major foci of security policies is the construction of a national narrative as means of sustainable peacebuilding. The framework recommends a national narrative as a counter-extremism tool that can counter the divisive ideologies based on ethnicity, religion, and sectarianism. This counter ideological strategy is believed to have the potential of bringing peace and unity among the diverse groups of people and promote integration in the country. The security policies further mentions that this unified and holistic national narrative will be founded on the principles of unity in diversity, tolerance, teaching of Islam and the political beliefs of the nation's founder Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

The security documents also recognize the need to regulate the hitherto unchecked media narratives and hostile propaganda against Pakistan, which leads to the promotion of existing conflicts, and add to the grievances. The policy documents stress the need to develop a regulatory framework that would enable the monitoring and regulation of print and electronic media within the jurisdiction of Pakistan. Additionally, the strict monitoring of media to curb divisive and discriminatory content is coupled with the training for responsible journalism.

The nation narrative aims to shape the public perception and influence social behavior of the citizens. Media reforms and building an inclusive national narrative can be instrumental in establishing unified and resilient society based on informed and educated citizen body. These reforms are central to reduce societal divisions, counter extremist ideologies, and to ensure that peacebuilding efforts reach and resonate with diverse group of people. The national narrative includes the dissemination of positive content, success stories and peace initiatives that shows a brighter picture of Pakistan. It is believed to be a key element in fostering the culture of peace and constructive dialogue.

### ***Research and Evidence-Based Policy***

Security policies also mention promotion of research and evidence-based policies as a key step to achieve sustainable peace and reduce social tension. The security framework recommends the promotion of both academic and applied research on the issues of social conflict, however, with the specific focus to understand the underlying causes of the conflict, its various dimensions, peacebuilding challenges, and ways of moving forwards. The social scientific research is acknowledged as foundational in formulating the evidence-based policies and will inform the peacebuilding intervention in various regions of the country.

The need to establish a closer links with academia, think tanks and scholars in the field of peace and security is also emphasized in the policy documents. This can be a crucial step towards forming evidence-based policymaking as universities and thinktanks will enable policy recommendation informed by local circumstances and context sensitive solutions. It is believed that by facilitating research and integrating its findings into security policies, Pakistan can develop more targeted, efficient, and meaningful peacebuilding strategies.

### ***Education's Relation to Peace and Conflict***

The issue of education has been comprehensively addressed in security framework, with an emphasis on its failure and suggested reforms to achieve the national goal of stability and peacebuilding. Aligned with the global literature on education in conflict affected contexts, education sector has been envisioned as a double-edged sword. The framework acknowledges the potential of education to cause harm to the

society as well as its ability to promote social cohesion through promotion of values of diversity, inclusivity, and tolerance.

### ***Education as a Factor in Extremism and Conflict***

The security policies seem to be sensitive to both the negative and positive outcomes of the education system. It recognizes education's potential in promoting to extremism as well as its capacity to contribute to peacebuilding. The policy framework acknowledges that Pakistan's education system is based on what is described as the 'banking model' of learning, which prioritizes memorization over critical thinking. Hence, the failure of education system is described as a critical issue, which enables exclusionary identity narratives to thrive among the country's youth.

The security policies also highlight the negative aspects of the parallel education system prevalent in the country which amplifies societal division. The education system is fractured along public, private and madrassah system, which promotes social and economic division in society. The result of this fragmented system inhibits the promotion of shared values and common identity. The policy framework also suggests that education reform is indispensable to counter extremist ideologies and foster an inclusive identity, thus, a more equitable education system with a modern pedagogical methods and curricular reforms are emphasized as a peacebuilding measure.

### ***Lack of evidence-based policies***

Another major issue highlighted in the security policies is the lack of quality research in Pakistan, particularly in the field of social sciences. This results in a fundamental lack of understanding of societal challenges, specially relating to extremism and terrorism. It emphasizes that these challenges cannot be addressed until their structural drivers are properly identified.

The security framework recognizes the need for capacity building of higher education institution in the country to enable the state apparatus to develop evidence based policies. It highlights a fundamental disconnect between universities and policy making bodies of the state, which results in ineffective policy interventions. Hence, universities are encouraged to engage in social research relating to conflict and peace-building strategies.

### ***Curricular Reforms***

One of the key recommendations in the security policies is a comprehensive curriculum reform aimed at promoting tolerance and peaceful coexistence. This includes the periodic revision of textbooks with the purpose of eliminating the divisive content and to promote diversity. Furthermore, the policy document emphasizes the inclusion of civic education, global civilizations, and critical thinking in school curricula. One of the major foci of reforms is to integrate the madrassah education into the mainstream education system by incorporating subjects such as English, Science, and Mathematics. While these recommendations signal a policy shift toward inclusive education, challenges remain in terms of implementation and acceptance, particularly in religious seminaries that have historically operated independently.

### ***Challenges in Education Governance and Policy Coordination***

Despite the devolution of education to provincial governments under the 18th Amendment, the security policies call for a nationally coordinated approach to education reform. Key challenges identified in the security framework include weak service delivery in the education sector, untrained staff, and the need for consensus between federal and provincial government to ensure cohesive education policies.

### ***Addressing Educational Inequality to Reduce Social Tensions***

The security framework recognizes inequality in educational access as a key driver of social and political instability in Pakistan, particularly in Balochistan. The low enrolment rate is considered as a huge challenge in achieving universal primary education. Similarly, parents from economically disadvantaged backgrounds prioritize child labor over education, which also contributes to the rise in out-of-school children.

The unemployment issue at the end of educational journey is also a huge problem for the country. This issue is more salient for madrasa graduates, leading to frustration and potential vulnerability to extremist recruitment. Thus, to address these issues and concerns, the security policies recommend targeted incentives for school enrollment and skills training programs to make education more meaningful for students and parents.

### ***Promoting Social Harmony through Education***

The security framework emphasizes the need for education to foster national integration and social harmony by providing more opportunities for cross-cultural interactions through dialogue and exchange programs. It is believed that the shared values and ideology will bind the different ethnic and sectarian groups together. Furthermore, it is also recommended to establish a counter-narrative library to address extremist ideologies through historical and religious scholarship.

Madrassahs (religious schools) emerge as one of the major security concerns and reforming this sector is considered a key peacebuilding strategy. Madrassah reforms involve a stringent regulation and fiscal oversight of religious schools to counter rising extremism in the society.

There is also a strong emphasis on the curricular reforms of the madrassahs aiming to integrate contemporary subjects into their curriculum and bringing them closer to the mainstream education system. By ensuring transparency in its funding sources, mandatory registration, and integrating madrassahs into the broader educational system, the reforms aim to provide students with diverse career opportunities and promote moderate ideologies.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The analysis of security framework, explored on the dimensions of (a) leading factors contributing to the conflict, (b) peacebuilding strategies, and (c) education's relationship with the conflict and peacebuilding, reveals a comprehensive nature and scope of state's policies. Security policies deal with all the aspects of questions being asked in this research work. However, based on the theoretical framework of 4Rs, there are various aspect that requires critical evaluation.

First, these policies do not represent an outcome a systematic effort and cohesive strategy. Although it treats the subject matter holistically and mentions the factors responsible for conflict and strategies for peacebuilding, but the factors are mentioned more like a 'laundry list' of factors rather than as something informed by a deeper theoretical understanding. There is a complete absence of engagement with theoretical debates in the field of peace and security studies. Due to the lack of theoretically informed guidelines on the critical issues, the security framework seems more like a collection of essays rather than policy documents providing deeper insights into the structural causes of the conflict, peace-building strategies, and the role education can play with relations to peace and conflict.

Another aspect related to the 'atheoretical' approach adopted in the security policies is the confusion over cause and effect' relationship between the various factors contributing to the conflict. For example, the relationship between conflict and inequality is not clearly established in a way that one gets to know which factor contributes to the other factor. Similarly, one gets lost that whether the salience of identity is



the cause or effect of inequalities existing on various grounds. This confusion is rampant throughout security policy documents.

Unlike the understanding of the causes of the conflict which eschews theoretical debate, the peacebuilding strategies mentioned in the security policies are predominantly underpinned by institutional approach. While the causes of conflict may vary, the approach to address security challenges overwhelmingly rely on increasing the capacity of the coercive organs of the state. The most frequently cited measures of peacebuilding are not informed by the structural drivers of the conflict but enhanced capabilities of security agencies, increased coordination, and financial support. It is assumed that peace can be achieved by creating more powerful security apparatus rather than addressing socio-economic, and political inequalities or historically accumulated grievances.

Related to further empowering the state's security arm is the bolstering the ideological intervention as well. The security framework suggests a construction of national narrative as key peace-building strategy. This is frequently cited in policy documents which traces the causes of the conflict in the individual rather than larger social structures. More specifically, the framers of the security policies seem to be of the opinion that conflict is the result of 'misguidance' or 'enemy propaganda' that fools the vulnerable youth particular in the peripheries of the state. Hence, the 'national narrative' will tackle the ideological challenge by providing an alternative to enemy propaganda. However, this strategy completely ignores the root causes of the conflict and mistakenly assumes psychological causes to be more important than structural causes of the conflict.

In addition to atheoretical approach, the security framework also takes an 'ahistorical' view of the conflict. Conflicts are historically informed and shaped, rather than discreet and unrelated series of events. Hence, it needs to be studied and understood by properly engaging with its peculiarity and historical context. However, the security framework is completely devoid of such historically informed analysis. History is mentioned only as passing reference rather than something having an effect and consequences for the society. This takes away the academic rigor from the policy documents which do not offer significant insights into the real causes of the conflict.

Education is recognized as a double-edged sword, having both negative and positive consequences. The parallel education system is rightly described as having 'stratification' effects on class and ideological lines. Curricular reforms are also stressed which is direly needed, however, policies fall short of bringing tangible proposals to develop inclusive and updated curriculum which meets the need of all segments of society. However, in the broader picture, education remains the tool to disseminate the ideological content of the state. In this context, the policy documents suggest education as a primary means of propagating the national narrative.

In the light of these findings and discussion, it is recommended that a more robust approach is needed to understand the causes of the conflict and address its structural drivers. The policy documents eschew from discussing the extensive literature produced in the field of peace and conflict studies. Similarly, the security framework is also devoid of theoretical approach and insights, which creates a confusing about the causes and effects of the conflict. Additionally, conflicts are historically informed and shaped, hence, should be understood in its proper contexts. Thus, it is suggested that a more theoretically informed and historically conscious approach needs to be adopted while framing the security policies.

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