Post-NATO Drawdown in Afghanistan and Regional Security: Post-Conflict Social Reconstruction Through Peace Education

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Peace is a basic human need but, unfortunately, in parts of the world, violence is a major cause of suffering for the inhabitants. Further, trouble in one country causes instability throughout the region. The history of Afghanistan is full of instability and, for the past few decades, the volatile situation has adversely affected its neighbours, especially Pakistan and China. In the post-NATO drawdown, Afghanistan's security is at stake, which is alarming for the whole region. This study is an attempt to analyse this situation, particularly regarding how a comprehensive peace education process can help promote regional security. The last part of the paper, which focuses mainly on mechanisms to initiate a peace education process, is the outcome of a ten-year-long field survey in which a large number of people were interviewed. The paper argues that, in addition to various other measures, there is an urgent need to initiate a comprehensive and integrated system of peace education in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and China via a network of peace education centres.

BACKGROUND

It is estimated that over one hundred million people died due to wars[1] during the twentieth century, and in the twenty-first century, violence, intolerance, and terrorism are frequently overarching themes, ruining the lives of millions of people around the globe. South and Central Asia are among the most

troubled regions in the world. In the late 1970s, the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan was countered by a systematized resistance of the Mujahedeen, followed by the Taliban era and the 9/11 attacks in the United States, and linked with the prevailing continued violence in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the rest of the region. This is a dangerous situation, not only for the people of this region but for the developed world in general, including the United States and Western Europe. Tens of thousands of innocent lives have been lost and, sadly, in spite of continued efforts by various governments, the establishment of a definite peace is not in sight. In the context of 9/11, this region is widely considered a breeding ground and exporter of violence to the rest of the world. A number of recent terrorist attacks in Europe, the United States, and elsewhere have had direct and indirect links with this region.[2] This unfortunate situation demands immediate, concrete, and innovative measures to promote the essence of peace at a grassroots level.

Afghanistan is a country of religio-ethnic diversity and, throughout its known history, its deserts, rugged mountains, and treacherous passes have proven to be a graveyard for intruding armies. The last three decades of foreign occupation, civil war, and insurgency have devastated the country. Since the 2001 American invasion of Afghanistan, it is estimated that 56,000 to 68,000 people have lost their lives. Of these, 21,000 to 23,000 were civilians,[3] 3,487 were coalition soldiers,[4] and over 20,000 were wounded.[5] Pakistan and Afghanistan are both situated at the junction of South and Central Asia. With many commonalities in their history, culture, and faith, Pakistan is Afghanistan's closest neighbour and the two countries share a long border. They face similar challenges linked to their geographic, ethnic, tribal, linguistic, and sectarian diversities. Like Afghanistan, diversity is a dominant element in Pakistan's socio-cultural and geographical environment.[6] Its multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-lingual society provides a rich cultural heritage[7] and a huge challenge to its governance.

In 1947, Pakistan was divided into two parts located more than a thousand miles apart. The country experienced massive bloodshed at birth and started its national life without required basic infrastructure. The continued internal political instability, the Kashmir dispute, a civil war ending with the separation of its east wing in 1971, three wars with India, four military coups, the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan in 1979 that resulted in an influx of over three million refugees into the country—all of these events caused major challenges for Pakistan and adversely affected the overall process of human

development, especially in the education sector, which suffered significant setbacks.[8] At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the 9/11 attacks and the American invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan's support for US military action in Afghanistan, rise of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the spill-over effect of instability in Afghanistan, and rivalry with India all contributed to further destabilization of the country. The prevailing violence in Pakistan is an outcome of a complicated network of integrated challenges, which since 9/11 have caused 49,000 deaths in the country, the vast majority being civilians.[9] The historical closeness of Afghanistan and Pakistan signals that the futures of both countries are interconnected.

Under the command of the United States, Afghanistan has been occupied by NATO forces for nearly a decade and half, their combat mission ending in December 2014. A few thousand remaining NATO soldiers aim to train Afghan security forces and assist the government in promoting stability. Sadly, in spite of the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians in Afghanistan—and Pakistan—the security situation in this country is still far from normal. Volatility in Afghanistan predominately manifests in the form of religious extremism, which is the prime threat to the security of both countries and the whole region. To the northeast of Afghanistan and Pakistan, China is an important neighbour and a major global player. The instability in Afghanistan and Pakistan directly and indirectly affects the internal stability of China, especially when it is struggling to deal with the religious uprising in its western province of Xinjiang which shares a border with both countries.[10] The economic cost of violence is also huge; it is estimated that, in 2014, the violence containment costs of China were $897 billion, five percent of its GDP. The same figures for Afghanistan and Pakistan were $19 billion (31 percent of GDP) and $67 billion (8 percent of GDP), respectively. If the $983 billion that were wasted due to violence had been used for human development, a huge positive impact in the region might have been possible.[11]

The violent conflicts between various segments of a society or societies start when they have conflicting objectives and attempt to impose their own will through violence.[12] In such conflicting environments, important socio-psychological and emotional orientations such as hatred, anger, and pride are linked with the roots of these conflicts,[13] and are channelled through cultural products such as books, educational material, and the media.[14] Thus, the younger generations in particular are exposed to violence. In

Afghanistan, for example, although the United Nations and other international donors have over the years spent millions of dollars on education for children, the highly religio-politicized textbooks have caused further division and violence in the society.[15] Michael Wessells gives the example of Sierra Leone where children were brainwashed and recruited as soldiers, and a similar situation developed in Afghanistan. In Wessells's view, to curb violent actions and reintegrate former young combatants into mainstream society, peace education is an important approach.[16] Here, the role of the education system is vital. There is an urgent need to initiate and develop a systematized process of peace education in the region from the school to the university levels.

MAIN FOCUS, CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATION, AND METHODOLOGY

With the ending of the Cold War in general and after 9/11 specifically, the global security situation has changed and is still changing. Central to this is the troubled region of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and China. This paper focuses on the nature of the threat to regional security and how this security can be strengthened in the post-NATO drawdown from Afghanistan. With these two considerations as a foundation, the paper attempts to establish how peace education helps in the social reconstruction process to promote regional security. How can peace education address the challenge of religious extremism in the region? How can peace education help facilitate change in the socio-psychological foundation of society to promote a culture of tolerance, mutual respect, and co-existence? How can the process of peace education be created and implemented in the region? These are large, complex, and debated issues. This study explores a possible way to initiate a process of peace education, which is only a part of the larger process to establish peace in this troubled region.

The research methodology for this study is mainly based on grounded theory and the theory of social reconstruction. Grounded theory explores the issue of regional security and the concerns of the people living in that area. This process includes identifying a substantive area, collecting data, open coding, writing memos throughout the process, selective coding and theoretical sampling, personal interviews, literature review, analysis, and write-up.[17] According to Anslem L. Glaser and Barney G. Strauss, the founders of this theory, this inductive method is "the discovery of theory

from data systematically obtained from social research."[18] Kathy Charmaz and Karen Henwood describe this theory as (1) gathering and analysing data, (2) remaining open to all possible options with regard to theoretical understanding of the data, (3) developing possible interpretations of outcomes through coding and nascent categorising, and (4) returning to the field to collect more data to cross check the information already obtained.[19] Using this methodology, this study focuses on the daily life experience of people of this region, the valued opinions of respondents contacted during the survey, and the progressive interaction between this researcher and his respondents. In this process, grounded theory and the theory of social reconstruction are used in partnership with the theories of regional security, human development, human security, global terrorism, global peace, and peace education (see Figure 1).

According to Mark Duffield, if pluralism is weak or non-existent in a society, we need to create and strengthen it through social reconstruction, a process of evolving fundamental change in the system.[20] The concept of social reconstruction is based on the assumption that if the security of a society is under threat, its survival is at stake and something must be done to avoid further destruction. Further, Michael Stephen Schiro argues that society should be viewed in its social perspectives—how it has been in the past, how it is now, and how it should be in the future. Social reconstruction is thus a philosophy of action-oriented education.[21] It is an important tool to bring positive change and educators must assume a leading role in this process.[22] Such change can be brought by developing a specific system of education tailored to the needs of the society.[23] This social reconstruction theory ties in with the concepts of regional security and human development. Barry Buzan and Ole Waver discuss the concept of regional security as the Regional Security Complex Theory. The core elements of this theory are as follows: (1) most threats to regional security can travel easily over a short distance as compared to a long distance, (2) security interdependence is a regionally based cluster (security complex), and (3) security interdependence is more intense among the actors who are within the complex than among those outside of it.[24] It indicates that neighbouring countries tend to collaborate for regional security more than countries outside the region. It also implies that regionally based cluster(s) can play an important role in the security of their respective region(s) of the world.[25]

Figure 1. Conceptual and Methodological Foundation
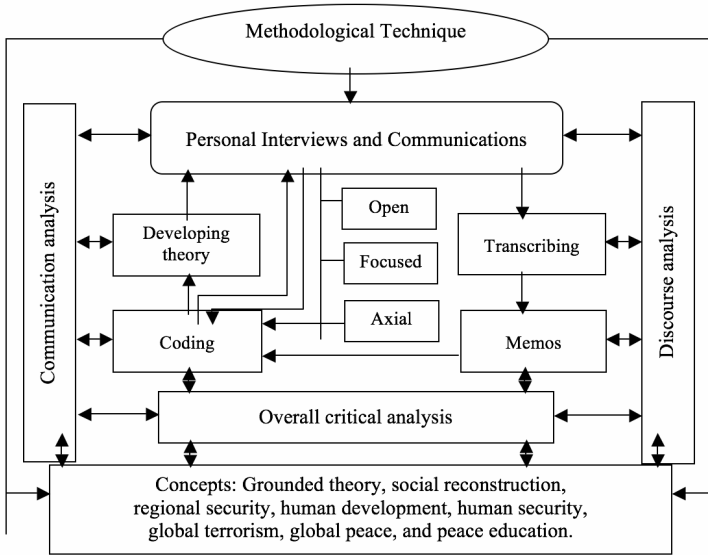
The term "human development" was first used by the World Bank[26] and, in its Human Development Report 1990, the UN Development Program (UNDP) argued, "Human development is a process of enlarging people's choices. The most critical of these wide-ranging choices are to live a long and healthy life, to be educated and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living. Additional choices include political freedom, guaranteed human rights and personal self-respect."[27] Two and half decades later, the Human Development Report 2014 went one step further and emphasized the need to secure the progress made in this area due to the risks of natural or human-made disasters in various parts of the world.[28] Human development is measured in the form of the "human development index" (HDI), which combines life expectancy, the level of literacy, and the standard of living. The HDI is an important instrument for judging the level of human development of different countries. The concept of human security is also an important ingredient for human development. In 1994, a comprehensive notion of human security was presented by the UNDP, which suggests that human security is not limited to external military threats to a country's border; rather, it encompasses a spectrum of people's needs, such as income security and security from crime. It also recognizes that "future conflicts may often be within nations rather than between them."[29] It argues

that human security is a global concern and, when the security of people in one country is under threat, it also affects the security of neighbouring countries.

There is no single definition of terrorism; one person's terrorist may be another person's freedom fighter. The contemporary global war on terrorism is led by the United States and, according to the US Department of State's report entitled Patterns of Global Terrorism, "the term terrorism means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience."[30] In the view of the US Congress, terrorism includes (1) any criminal action harmful to human life, (2) intimidation of the civilian population, and (3) attempts to influence government policies by coercion.[31] The United Nations General Assembly similarly views terrorism as criminal acts aiming to create an environment of fear in the general public. Terrorism can be enacted by an individual, a group, or an organisation for political motives or for some other unjustifiable objectives.[32] Against this, the concept of peace is considered a state of environment which is free of war, violence, and injustice.[33] According to Johan Galtung, peace is "a political condition that ensures justice and social stability through formal and informal institutions, practices, and norms."[34] Like the UNDP, the Sydney-based Institute for Economics and Peace is carrying out substantial work in human development and every year calculates the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) and the Global Peace Index (GPI).[35]

UNICEF provides a concise and comprehensive definition of peace education and its purpose: the "process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth, and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national, or international level."[36] The United Nations has declared 21 September as the International Day of Peace and, in 2013, it focused particularly on the promotion of peace education.[37] A primary aim of UNESCO,[38] and of peace researchers, is to support peace education. According to Manish Thapa and colleagues, although peace education is "an amorphous concept that can be understood and practiced quite differently from country to country, or from culture to culture," it offers opportunities to acquire knowledge, values, and skill development, which are helpful in promoting

mutual understanding, shared values, cooperation, conflict resolution, and the prevention of war, violence, and injustice.[39] The main focus of peace depends on the needs and objectives of society. A major overhauling of the educational system and curricula is required to achieve this objective.

This study is based on both primary and secondary sources of information. It utilizes the purposive sampling method and, within this judgmental technique, critical case sampling and expert sampling methods were used. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to gather the information from respondents in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and China. Some were living outside of their countries of origin. In the case of China, 87 percent of the respondents came from the Xinjiang province, a troubled part of the country. The data was collected from 2005 to 2014, and respondents from a wide range of backgrounds included academicians, professionals, members of the security forces, religious scholars, people from different sects, students and teachers of religious seminaries, business professionals, educators, planners and administrators, employees of various organisations, members of the general public, young children, and victims of violence. In addition to 491 personal interviews (Afghanistan 172, Pakistan 168, and China 151), 48 focus group discussions were also carried out (Afghanistan 13, Pakistan 24, and China 11). A further 273 brief communications were made through e-mails, by telephone, and by mail (Afghanis 44%, Pakistanis 35%, Chinese 21%). The views of these people were particularly helpful in determining the direction of this study. The earlier part of this paper's discussion is based on secondary sources and the latter part is based entirely on the respondents' views.

STATE OF REGIONAL HUMAN (UNDER)DEVELOPMENT

An overview of human development of this region presents a discouraging picture, especially in the cases of Afghanistan and Pakistan. According to the UNDP, among all of the world's 216 countries and territories, both countries fall in the low human development category. They also have the lowest ranking in the region. Sadly, Afghanistan's literacy rate, life expectancy, per capita gross national income, and HDI value are also the lowest among its neighbours (see Table 1). That said, the country's average annual growth in HDI from 2000 to 2013 is the highest in the region. The main reason is that during this period foreign military intervention and huge external aid helped the country to improve its human development. However, most foreign forces have now left and continuing international aid is not guaranteed;

it is not clear how the country will be able to maintain its growth in human development, which is crucial for its stability. Similarly, the situation in Pakistan is also far from satisfactory. Its US$62 billion foreign debt, low foreign direct investment, low level of savings, low investment in education and health sectors, and high level of internal instability pose major challenges for human development.[40]

Table 1. Regional Situation of Human Development

Country	Human Development Index (HDI) Value	Average Annual Growth in HDI (%) (2000-13)	Global HDI Ranking	Adult Literacy Rate (%)	Life expectancy at Birth	Gross National Income / Capita (US$)
Afghanistan	0.468	2.46	169	28.1[(b)]	60.9	1,904
Pakistan	0.537	1.30	146	54.9	66.6	4,652
China	0.719	1.52	91	95.1	75.3	11,477
India	0.586	1.49	135	62.8	66.4	5,150
Sri Lanka	0.750	1.07	73	91.2	74.3	9,250
Bangladesh	0.558	1.62	142	57.7	70.7	2,713
Nepal	0.540	1.42	145	57.4	68.4	2,194
Tajikistan	0.607	1.07	133	99.7	67.2	2,424
Kyrgyzstan	0.628	0.52	125	99.2	67.5	3,021
Kazakhstan	0.757	0.84	70	99.7	66.5	19,441
Uzbekistan	0.661	n/a[(a)]	116	99.4	68.2	5,227
Turkmenistan	0.698	n/a[(a)]	103	99.6	65.5	11,533
Iran	0.749	1.07	75	85.0	74.0	13,541

Source: United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report 2014 (New York: United Nations Development Programme, 2014) 160-67, 192-95.

Note: (a) Figures for the average annual growth rate of HDI for Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan were not available in the UNDP's report.

(b) Figures for the adult literacy rate in Afghanistan were not available in the UNDP's report. The present figure is taken from CIA, "The World Factbook," 12 April 2015, https://www.cia.gov/Library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2103.html. An overview of data reflects that out of

216 countries and territories of the world, Afghanistan was second from the bottom.

It is noteworthy that Afghanistan's neighbours, Tajikistan, Kirgizstan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Iran have fared much better relative to other countries. It is also encouraging to see that these countries have performed well in their education sector. The record of Sri Lanka is particularly commendable as, in spite of its long civil war, the country has always given high priority to its education sector. The data also indicates that although the per capita gross national income of Bangladesh and Nepal is around half that of Pakistan, both countries have performed better in education. Pakistan should focus on educating its population as development in this sector will help to promote internal stability.

REGIONAL (IN)SECURITY

Like the UNDP's HDI, the Institute for Economics and Peace regularly publishes its Global Terrorism Index (GTI) and Global Peace Index (GPI) reports. The GTI is based on four factors: (1) the total number of incidents (weight = 1), (2) the total number of fatalities (weight = 3), (3) the total number of injuries (weight = 0.5), and (4) the sum of property damages measure (weight = 1 to 3). The maximum value in the index is 10.[41] Similar to the GTI, the GPI is a composition of twenty-two quantitative and qualitative variables which ranks 162 countries of the world that encompass over 99 percent of the world's population. The GTI is mainly based on three major themes: (1) the level of safety and security in a society, (2) the extent of internal or external conflicts, and (3) the extent of militarisation.[42] When considering the thirteen countries of the region (see Table 2), the figures for 2014 show that, with its second position in global ranking, Afghanistan is the most unstable country, followed by Pakistan (3rd), India (6th), Bangladesh (23rd), Nepal (24th), and China (25th). The figures of change in the score also reflect that, compared to the previous year, the situation has gotten worse. The situation in five Central Asian states (Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan) is also far from satisfactory as the threat from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, porous borders, and the narcotics trade are major challenges.[43] A similar trend can also be observed in the GPI, where the situation in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and China is seriously discouraging. The table also shows that the violence containment cost was the highest in Afghanistan followed by Pakistan. It is estimated that

the total economic impact of violence in the world is $9.8 trillion, or 11.3 percent of the global GDP, double that for all of Africa's GDP.[44]

Table 2. GTI and GPI Ranks and Scores of Regional Countries

Country	Global Terrorism Index		Violence Containment Cost (% of GDP)	Global Peace Index	
	GTI Rank	GTI Score		GPI Rank	GPI Score
Afghanistan	2	9.39	23.5 ($280)	161	3.41
Pakistan	3	9.37	7.0 ($225)	154	3.10
China	25	5.21	3.7 ($370)	108	2.20
India	6	7.86	3.6 ($145)	143	2.57
Sri Lanka	36	4.01	4.7 ($315)	105	2.19
Bangladesh	23	5.25	2.0 ($45)	98	2.10
Nepal	24	5.23	2.4 ($35)	76	1.98
Tajikistan	68	1.99	3.5 ($180)	126	2.39
Kyrgyzstan	112	0.10	5.0 ($130)	125	2.38
Kazakhstan	65	2.37	3.9 ($570)	103	2.15
Uzbekistan	111	0.14	4.4 ($165)	104	2.17
Turkmenistan	124	0.00	4.0 ($430)	95	2.09
Iran	28	4.90	6.1 ($785)	131	2.43

Source: Columns 2-3: Institute for Economics and Peace, Global Terrorism Index 2014 (Sydney: Institute for Economics and Peace, 2014), 21, 82-84.

Columns 4-6: Institute for Economics and Peace, Global Peace Index 2014 (Sydney: Institute for Economics and Peace, 2014), 5-6, 100-1.

Note: In Column 4, figures in brackets are the violence containment cost per person.

In spite of its fast economic development, China faces unrest in Tibet[45] and the western province of Xinjiang.[46] The history of ethnic unrest in China is far older than the modern history of the country. The recent waves of violent riots in Tibet and Xinjiang are an ongoing challenge for China's internal stability. In March 2008, in the city of Lhasa, hundreds

of Buddhist monks gathered and protested against Beijing's rule. During the next month, the global Olympic torch rally became the flashpoint for protest. From March 2011 to January 2012, as many as sixteen people set themselves on fire to protest Chinese rule in Tibet.[47] Unfortunately, the history of unrest in Xinjiang is far worse than in Tibet. In 2009, nearly 200 people died and over 1,600 were injured in violence. In 2011, police killed twenty-seven protesters and four Uyghurs were sentenced to death by the courts. Then, in the years 2012-14, violence further increased when 250 people lost their lives.[48] The unrest in both Tibet and Xinjiang has ethnic and religious roots. Tibetans are mainly Buddhists while a majority of Uyghurs follow the Islamic faith. A high migration of Huns in these regions is another key reason for unrest. For instance, in 1949, Huns in Xinjiang numbered only 6.7 percent; by 2008 this proportion had increased to 40 percent.[49] While China considers the unrest an internal matter, the external world sees it as the backfire of heavy handed government policies in which native inhabitants are not allowed to practice their culture and faith.[50]

From a global perspective, the arguments of the Institute for Economics and Peace are also supported by the US Department of Homeland Security.[51] The Institute presented data for the ten countries in the world that experienced the highest number of terrorist attacks in 2013. Iraq topped the list, followed by Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India. Pakistan suffered 1,920 deadly terrorist attacks in which 2,315 people lost their lives and 4,989 were injured. The same figures for Afghanistan were 1,144, 3,111 and 3,717, respectively (see Figure 2). According to the US Department of Homeland Security, in Afghanistan, of the total number of terrorist attacks that occurred in 2013, over half (53%) were conducted by the Taliban. One-third of all worldwide suicide attacks took place in Afghanistan, with the remaining two-thirds in Iraq, Pakistan, Nigeria, Yemen, Syria, and Somalia. Afghanistan's suicide attacks were concentrated in the southern provinces of Helmand and Kandahar, where over six hundred people lost their lives.[52] On 18 April 2015, a suicide attack in the eastern city of Jalalabad killed thirty-three people and injured over one hundred.[53] For this reason, the US Council on Foreign Relations has argued that after the drawdown of combat forces of the coalition, the situation in Afghanistan will be fragile. Therefore, the United States intends to keep approximately ten thousand troops in this country for some time.[54]

Fig. 2: Top Ten Countries of the World with Highest Number of Terrorist Attacks in 2013
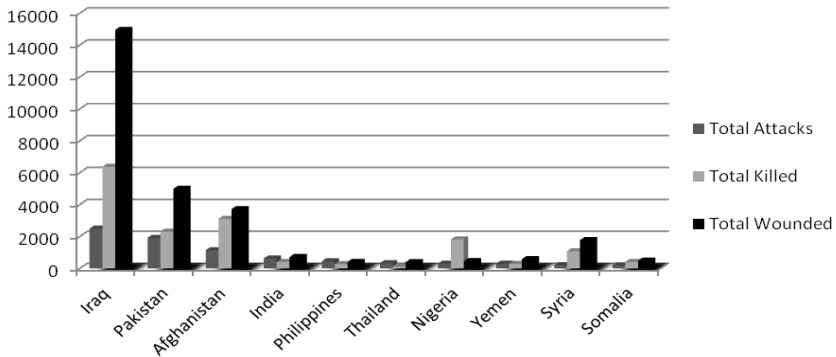

Source: Derived from US Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Centre of Excellence, *START: Annexture of Statistical Information - Country Reports on Terrorism 2013*, Baltimore: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, April 2014, p, 4.

Strategically, Pakistan is situated in one of the most sensitive regions of the world; it is the junction point between South and Central Asia and the Middle East. As an important Muslim majority country, a nuclear power, and the gateway to Central Asia and China, Pakistan also faces India's hegemonic ambitions in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea. This strategic importance has created several complicated challenges for this country. The biggest challenge at present is the waves of violence and terrorism created by a variety of insurgent groups, such as the Taliban and Bloch separatists, which the government claims are funded and supported by external powers.[55] Although incidents of violence are not new in Pakistan, threats to national security have increased many fold in the post 9/11 era. From the 9/11 attacks to early 2015, an estimated 440 suicide bombings took place in the country, over 6,000 citizens died, and another 16,000 were seriously injured.[56] Regarding terrorism, the worst year in Pakistan's history was 2009, when Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan occupied the tourist city of Swat, less than 300 kilometres from Islamabad. A military action named Operation Rah-e-Rast was carried out and the area was cleared of insurgents. Sadly, the nation paid a heavy price as 12,000 were killed in 2009 and over 30,000 in the following five years (see Figure 3).

Continued instability in Afghanistan encourages religious violence in

Pakistan, especially clashes between various groups of the Shi'a and Sunni sects of Islam. This situation worsened during the early 1990s; it is estimated that as many as 2,894 people were killed and another 9,401 were injured in religious violence from 1990 to 2014.[57] This alarming state of affairs demands urgent and concrete measures for social reconstruction in the region. How can peace education play its part in this process? What should be the key features of peace education and how should it be tailored in accordance to the needs of local communities? Who will take the lead, how will it be financed, and how can it be implemented? The coming discussion explores answers to these and related questions.

Figure 3. Fatalities in Terrorist Violence in Pakistan 2003-2014
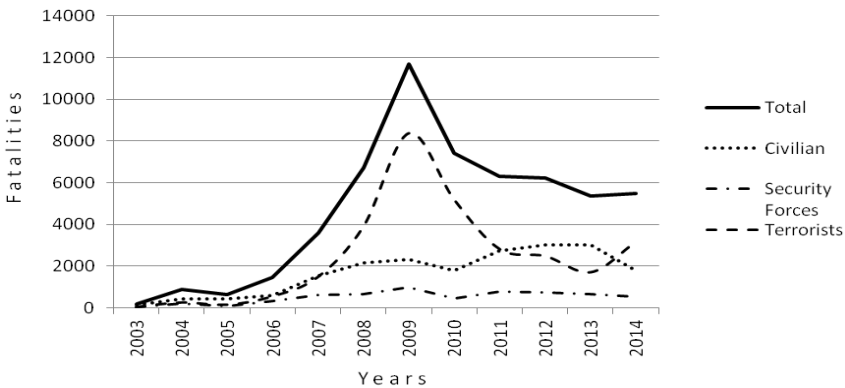
Source: Derived from Satp.org. http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/casualties.htm, accessed on 12 April 2014.

WHY PEACE EDUCATION?

Sadly, Pakistan and Afghanistan lack peace, due mainly to the widespread intolerance based on varying religious, cultural, ethnic, and political agendas. To overcome this complicated state of affairs, a comprehensive package is needed that includes good governance supported by efficient law enforcement and security agencies, just distribution of national resources, a favourable environment for investment, human development, and minimum levels of corruption. However, these measures will not bring their desired benefits without a well-developed system of promoting tolerance and mutual respect. This requires an integrated network of peace education at local, national, and regional levels. It is even more important in the context of widespread

human underdevelopment in Afghanistan and Pakistan and instability in the Xinjiang province of China, and this demands a coordinated approach to regional peace. The proposed approach is in line with the regional security theory of Barry Buzan.

The abovementioned ten-year-long field survey conducted by this author reveals some interesting results (see Table 3). While all respondents from the three countries fully agreed on the need for good governance, their opinions varied with regards to other factors. For instance, the vast majority of respondents from Afghanistan and Pakistan (96% and 85%, respectively) emphasised the need for efficient and strong law enforcement agencies but only 32 percent favoured this in China. This difference is possibly due to the overly strict approach used by the Chinese law enforcement agencies. A clear majority from all three countries favoured the establishment of peace education centres. Perhaps due to its higher level of instability, this demand was the highest in Afghanistan (81%), followed by Pakistan (68%) and China (63%). A similar trend can also be seen regarding the need for human development. For example, the demand for a just distribution of resources was highest in China (87%), followed by Pakistan (81%) and Afghanistan (77%). The main reason for China's high percentage is that a large number of Uyghurs from Xinjiang province are uncomfortable with the large scale in-migration of Huns who, they believe, are taking over their natural resources and jobs. Indigenous inhabitants of Xinjiang blame the Chinese government for encouraging this migration, which, in their view, is changing the demographic composition of the province and causing mistrust leading to social unrest. Instability and corruption are directly related to each other and are mutually supportive; for this reason, nearly all respondents (99%) highlighted the need for curbing corruption in Afghanistan.

Table 3. Respondents' Views on the Important Measures for the Promotion of Regional Peace (Percentages)

Necessary measures for the promotion of regional peace and stability	Afghanistan	Pakistan	China
Good governance	100	100	100
Efficient law enforcement agencies	96	85	32

Peace education (Promotion of tolerance)	81	68	63
Human development (Overall process)	98	92	78
Just distribution of resources	77	81	87
Investment friendly environment	88	92	63
Minimum level of corruption	99	96	74
Other measures	73	67	51

Source: Author's field survey, 2005-2014

Note: Other measures include strengthening the process of democracy and respect for human rights.

On the whole, the survey findings reveal that peace education may be an important catalyst in the overall process of promoting regional security. Joint efforts by neighbouring countries could be productive and mutually beneficial. The following points reflect the situation of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and China.

1. In the contemporary globalized world, regional security is linked to the national security and stability of each country in this regionally-based cluster.

2. International cooperation and especially regional cooperation within the cluster are vital in promoting security.

3. Regional security provides a solid base for human development.

4. Education is the key component of human development and is essential for progress and prosperity.

5. Considering religious extremism, which promotes violence in the region, peace education can play an important role in promoting regional peace and stability.

6. The variation in the cultures of communities and value systems calls, not for a uniform approach to peace education, but for a package of peace education tailored in accordance with ground realities and requirements.

The survey results reveal that a clear majority of respondents from all

three countries support the initiation of a peace education process; these included a large number of professionals (Afghanistan 22%, Pakistan 31%, China 19%). More than half of the total (56%) suggested that the process to initiate peace education should be jointly started by Afghanistan, Pakistan, and China, as their troubled areas are geographically, religiously, and ideologically interlinked. More than one-third (35%) suggested that this process should start under the umbrella of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), which, in their view, is the most important and relevant regional organization for this purpose.

MECHANISM OF DELIVERY: REGIONAL PEACE AND PEACE EDUCATION CENTRES

Founded as the Shanghai Five in 1996 and then renamed the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in 2001, the SCO is mainly a politico-economic and military organization. With the recent joining of Pakistan and India, its membership now is eight, including China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Other regional countries, such as Afghanistan, Mongolia, and Iran, have observer status. The main focus of the SCO is cooperation on security supported by economic and cultural collaboration. The prevailing instability of the region demands that Afghanistan also be given full membership in the SCO and a joint process of peace education be started as early as possible. During the field survey, respondents from all three countries highlighted the need to establish peace education centres in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and China. A brief outline of the program is presented below.

Sadly, the discipline of peace education is almost non-existent in this region where it is most needed. It is commonly known that Afghanistan's eastern part, Pakistan's western areas, and China's western province of Xinjiang are the most troubled areas. Geographically, because these areas are adjacent to each other, a three-way joint strategy to establish peace education centres in these countries should be adopted. It is noteworthy that Qandahar is considered the spiritual capital of the Taliban and, fortunately, Qandahar University is one of the main universities in Afghanistan. Abdul Wali Khan University, situated in the city of Mardan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan, is a young and dynamic institution. In Xinjiang, Xinjiang University in Urumqi is the best-known university in the province. All three universities have the required expertise to establish peace education

centres within their purviews. These centres should be established under the joint administrative set-up of their respective universities and the SCO. They should also develop a strong working relationship with the United Nations University in Tokyo, UNESCO, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and the International Islamic University in Islamabad. Such collaboration would strengthen the credibility of these centres' activities.

SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION AND STRATEGIC FOCUS OF PROPOSED PEACE EDUCATION CENTRES

As seen in Table 3, a clear majority of those interviewed in all three countries favours the initiation of peace education. During the field survey, it was encouraging to see that local and national political leaders also favoured this initiative, including the establishment of peace education centres. Notably, while researching the present project, I also visited a significant number of mosques and madrassas where I had detailed discussions with religious teachers, students, imams of mosques, and religio-political leaders. These people have strong influence among their respective followers and influence on the decision making process. It was good to hear their voices in support of promoting peace, not only by establishing peace education centres in universities but also by adding courses in the existing curricula, particularly courses that highlight peace, tolerance, and coexistence in Islam. They emphasized that this activity should be carried out with their consultation and without foreign interference or pressure. There was a clear consensus among madrassas of different sects of Islam that only a small minority of religious extremists are attempting to hijack their religion. Islamic peace education will be helpful to overcome this problem.[58] Despite the wide public, religious, and political support, the establishment of these proposed centres is not a simple and straightforward process. Various stakeholders have the common objective of peace but they may have varying opinions regarding how to attain it. These stakeholders include governments and non-government organizations, mosques and madrassas, political and religious leadership, educators, students, community elders, media, and the general public. In these circumstances, a major challenge is how and where to start this process.

The challenge of establishing peace is difficult. In Afghanistan, the Afghan Taliban are considered a major threat to peace, and the so-called Islamic State is another emerging challenge. In the prevailing instability, the

withdrawal of NATO combat forces has not been positive for this country. However, an encouraging factor is the American intention to dialogue with the Taliban to find a political settlement to disputes. These efforts can be further enhanced by involving the SCO. Pakistan's situation is different from Afghanistan's; here Tehrik-i-Taliban and various other extremist groups are creating a threat to its stability. Due to the killing of innocent citizens and school children, these groups have little public support. An encouraging sign is that the Pakistan Army has taken a tough stance and is winning against them. Fortunately, the Army also enjoys broad support in national and international circles and has started various educational and human development programs in the troubled areas of the country. Some fruitful activities are already taking place to promote peace education in Pakistan and Afghanistan. China's situation is very different from its two neighbours. During the field survey, several respondents said that heavy-handed government actions in Xinjiang are not helping to promote stability in the province; therefore, emphasis should be on a political settlement of the crises. They recommended that (1) the government relax the ban on practicing religion; (2) departments of Islamic Studies be established in some colleges of Xinjiang; (3) existing curricula be amended by adding the subject of peace education; (4) peace education centres be established in various universities; and (5) renowned local Muslims and eminent scholars from Muslim countries be hired as faculty members for the proposed centres.

Undoubtedly, the Chinese government will not allow the establishment of madrassas anywhere. The above suggestions could be helpful to satisfy the masses and overcome the problem of social unrest. Fortunately, China enjoys friendly relations with Pakistan and Afghanistan, and, having made huge investments, has strong economic interests in both countries. Both countries can use diplomatic channels to persuade the Chinese government to implement the above five points. Social stability in Xinjiang would have a far-reaching and positive impact on China's national economy and be beneficial for the whole region.

Given the prevailing tensions and the need for social reconstruction in the region, for the wellbeing of millions of inhabitants, the governments of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and China—and significant community leaders—need to collaborate to promote a culture of peace and tolerance.[59] This is not only in their interest but will also benefit other countries of this region. Within the framework and with the assistance of the SCO, the three

countries should jointly develop a detailed mechanism to establish peace education centres in each country. These centres should establish strong working relationships with each other so that their joint efforts produce positive outcomes. This task can be carried out in three phases, and a brief outline of phased activities follows below.

Phase One: Present to 2020

Once the proposed centres are established in the respective universities, their main tasks should be

1. to promote an understanding about the nature of conflict and the need for peace;[60]

2. to establish a base for carrying out conceptual and empirical research to explore the ways and means to tailor peace education, its mechanism of delivery, and its future strategy in accordance with the needs of respective communities;[61]

3. to provide an effective platform where a variety of professionals and scholars can offer their expertise to further develop this field;

4. to develop websites to receive and support ideas regarding socio-political and religio-cultural diversity;

5. to provide facilities in which to conduct workshops for parents and peace events for the public;

6. to initiate certificate and diploma programs in peace education for community leaders, volunteers, government officials, and workers of non-government organizations;

7. to develop teacher training programs in peace education and produce curricula for mainstream schools and madrassas.[62]

Dealing with the activities of mosques and madrassas is a sensitive issue in a Muslim majority country like Pakistan. However, if the matter is tackled strategically, there are ways to progress. Some non-government organizations in this country are already working at local levels to promote peace in mainstream schools and madrassas, such as the Peace Education and Development Foundation (Islamabad), the Peace Education Foundation (Islamabad), the Peace Education Welfare Organisation (Karachi), and the Programme on Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution (Karachi University). The Peace Education Foundation runs a variety of good programs, including a six-week certificate for madrassa teachers, and training of imams as

community leaders and interfaith skills faith leaders. It has also produced a textbook: *Peace Education and Islam: A Textbook for Secondary Level.*[63] There are several success stories that can support organizations and the proposed peace education centres.

Phase Two: 2021-2025

This phase can mainly be considered an extension of phase one. It should not only consolidate the steps taken earlier but also expand those horizontally and vertically to ensure that these centres have a greater impact in their respective countries and the region as a whole. During this period, the centres need

1. to work as think-tanks and help to prepare and coordinate local, national, and regional strategies relating to peace education;

2. to develop standardized parameters to monitor the implementation of respective strategies and outcomes;

3. to establish and strengthen good working relationships with mainstream schools and the madrassa system in Afghanistan and Pakistan, with the main aim to promote a culture of peace through social reconstruction;

4. by the end of this phase, to initiate graduate and post-graduate programs in peace education.

How can peace education help war-torn communities in their social reconstruction process? As of 2011, the United States Institute of Peace supported a project in Afghanistan named "Help the Afghan Children" (HTAC) that ran a peace education program in seven schools in the northern areas of the country. The program educated 2,800 students, including female students. HTAC also trained 315 teachers and 750 parents. The outcome of this activity exceeded expectations as the number of conflicts decreased from 3,457 to 345 per month. Similarly, the number of potential conflicts peacefully resolved increased from 100 to 2,960 per month. Due to this enormous success, HTAC earned the support of the Afghan Ministry of Education and the Ministry considered expanding this program in other areas of the country.[64] It is also encouraging to see that, in 2015, with the assistance of the German government, a peace education curriculum was introduced in teacher training colleges. This is projected to benefit some 75,000 students in the following two years.[65]

Phase Three: 2026-2030

Here, the main focus should not only be to consolidate the progress made during the first two phases but also to proceed further in accordance with the lessons learnt during that period. Main goals of this phase are

1. to strengthen capacity building to identify and analyse causes of potential future conflicts;

2. to consolidate the process of community cohesion[66] and peaceful resolution of potential conflicts through effective mediation and dialogue;[67]

3. to promote diversity, gender equality, and inter-cultural, inter-religious, and religio-cultural understandings of global citizenship;

4. to promote understanding about human rights and responsibilities, especially in mosques and madrassas;

5. to harmonize and strengthen the partnership between media and academia to achieve the desired aims.

The above is a time-bound broad overview of the activities of the proposed centres. Again, in collaboration with local stakeholders and foreign experts, these centres need to develop comprehensive peace education curricula in all three countries. The main focus of these activities is to bring positive change in human behaviour. In addition to well-developed websites and facilities for workshops and peace events, the centres will promote input from writers and artists, professional athletes, motivational speakers, neighbourhood leaders, and law enforcement personnel. It is noteworthy that Pakistan's National Education Policy of 2009 already emphasizes that peace education and interfaith harmony should be incorporated in the curricula.[68] One may question the cost and ambitions of this program. Certainly, the establishment of these centres and the carrying out of all the activities will require a huge investment both in finances and in human capital to promote peace; but then, no financial cost can match the value of human safety and security. The long-term advantages of this program will be multifarious—it will help to promote peace in the region and bring positive change to the lives of millions of people.

REVIEW AND REFLECTIONS

Afghanistan and Pakistan are situated in a sensitive and troubled region of the world. Since the Soviet interference in the late 1970s, Afghanistan has been in the grip of violence. The 9/11 attacks prompted NATO intervention but that has failed to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan. The spill-over effect of this situation has directly affected the stability of Pakistan and China, especially its western province of Xinjiang. The US-led NATO coalition ended its combat mission and withdrew its forces at the end of 2014. A few thousand soldiers remain to train Afghan security forces, but the situation in Afghanistan is far from normal, posing a huge threat to human security in the region. Afghanistan is far behind its neighbours with regard to life expectancy, per capita income, and literacy rates, which all affect the state of peace in the country. Sadly, continued instability in Afghanistan has also encouraged religious extremism, which is a major threat to regional security. Meanwhile, Pakistan is struggling to overcome the Taliban insurgency, and China is facing a similar problem in its Xinjiang province and in Tibet. The picture of human development in the region, especially in the case of Afghanistan and Pakistan, is bleak.

In light of the post-NATO drawdown, peace education can play a key role in developing a culture of tolerance that promotes regional security and human development. This paper's research indicates that, apart from various other measures, access to education and especially the initiation of comprehensive and integrated programs of peace education are crucial for promoting the culture of tolerance and reconciliation. Under the administrative setup of the SCO, China, Pakistan, and Afghanistan should jointly establish peace education centres and start the process of peace education in all three countries. The proposed centres can help develop and implement local, national, and regional programs to enhance knowledge and skills of community mechanisms to strengthen peace at all levels. A multidisciplinary holistic approach, based on various dimensions of education for promoting an environment of peace, is required for all communities and at all levels and forms of education. This is particularly important in relation to religio-ethical dimensions of tolerance and non-violence, respect for human rights, realisation of human responsibilities, democracy, cultural and linguistic diversity, and intercultural and international understanding, all of which are key elements of the peace process.

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