The Afghan Taliban's Advocacy: An Antecedent for Pakistan's Ontological Security

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Abstract

Pakistan commenced the Afghan Taliban's advocacy when they controlled the throne of Kabul in 1996. Likewise, when Taliban 2.0 took over Kabul, Pakistan resumed its advocacy at different international forums. From the very outset, Afghanistan and Pashtun nationalists have threatened Pakistan's ontological security. However, with the help of the Taliban's advocacy, Pakistan preserves its ontological security. The extant literature has covered all the causes of Pakistan's advocacy of the Taliban except one, which will be covered in this study. This research will elucidate that Pakistan advocates for the Taliban primarily to protect its ontological security through the lens of ontological security theory. Further, this scholarship seeks to analyze what ontological security means in the milieu of Pakistan. How did Pashtun nationalist movements threaten Pakistan's ontological security? Why is it crucial for Pakistan to secure itself from ontological security threats? Data has been collected for this study from primary sources, and secondary sources instance articles, journals, books, twitter accounts and speeches. Moreover, Afghanistan and Pashtun nationalist movements, i.e., the Red Shirts Movement (RSM) and Pashtun Tahaffuz (protection) Movement (PTM) have persistently posed threats to Pakistan's ontological security by inciting Pashtun nationalism. Therefore, Pakistan promotes Islamic Nationalism and advocates for the Afghan Taliban, who prefer Islam vis-à-vis Pashtun identity, to tackle such threats and safeguard its ontological security.

Keywords: Ontological Security, Afghanistan, RSM, PTM. Pashtun Nationalism, Islamic Nationalism.

Introduction

Pakistan faced ontological security threats in the form of Afghanistan and Abdul Ghaffar Khan's Red Shirts Movement (RSM) on the eve of India's partition in 1947. In contrast to physical security, ontological security is known as "Security of the Self." It explains that every actor acts to protect their sense of self and has a fundamental need for ontological security. For every actor, ontological insecurity is intolerable and must be defended with all possible means. In addition, states look for a sense of security against anxieties that undermine their sense of identity.

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The RSM and Afghanistan have supported an independent Pashtunistan from the beginning, which has caused ontological insecurity for the nascent state of Pakistan. In the past, the monarchy of Zahir Shah, the republic of M. Daoud, and communist governments after 1978 have all questioned Pakistan's right to rule over the Pashtun areas. They kept pushing for a separate Pashtun state to be made within Pakistan and wanted to take over Pakistan's lost land to make "Greater Afghanistan." Pakistan has worked hard to ensure its ontological security by suppressing the Pashtuns' demand for an independent Pashtunistan. During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, Pakistan channelled US aid to Islamist resistance groups under its auspices and denied giving this aid and weapons to the resistance groups oriented toward the former King Zahir Shah, who had backed the Pashtunistan movement during his reign (Harrison, 2008).

Similarly, Pakistan supported GulbuddinHekmatyar (who preferred Islam to Pashtun identity) in the 1970s to quell Pashtun nationalism backed by Afghanistan. Further, Pakistan backed the Afghan Taliban in the 1990s, which were pan-Islamists and had no affiliation with the Pashtunistan movement. They were not concerned about ethnicity. Pakistan had weakened the demand for independent Pashtunistan through the Taliban. With Pakistan's assistance, the Afghan Taliban emerged as a dominant force in Afghanistan's civil war in the 1990s. After prematurely recognizing them, Pakistan began to advocate for them to the rest of the world. It persuaded Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to accept the Taliban government. Because of their strict rules and breaches of human rights, the other states did not recognize them. The United States (US) ousted the Taliban from power in Afghanistan in 2001 following the 9/11 attack. Besides, Pakistan resumed its advocacy for them in 2021 after they retook control of Kabul (Noor, 2021).

Before the Taliban's reign, the Ghani government was a staunch supporter of Pashtun nationalism. He explicitly supported the Pashtun Tahaffuz (Protection) Movement (PTM) and incited Pashtun nationalism. When the Taliban toppled the Ghani government in 2021 and controlled the throne of Kabul, Pakistan started its advocacy at several international forums: the United Nations (UN) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Pakistan believes that a friendly regime in the form of the Taliban in Afghanistan could assist in preserving itaontological security.

Pakistan reckons the Taliban regime is friendly and advocates for them for several reasons. The most prominent is to replace Pashtun nationalism with Islamic nationalism because the Taliban are less concerned with Pashtun nationalism and more concerned with Islamic nationalism. Therefore, Pakistan believes it can ensure its ontological security through them, which has been threatened by other Afghani rulers and PTM.

Several scholars have addressed various causes of Pakistan's advocacy of the Taliban and primarily focused on physical security instead of ontological security. However, this research claims that the leading cause behind Pakistan's advocacy of the Taliban is to ensure its ontological security from different ontological security threats, i.e., Afghanistan and PTM, through advancing Islamic nationalism and subduing Pashtun nationalism. It will be beneficial for the researchers to understand Pakistan's advocacy of the Afghan Taliban and its harsh treatment of the PTM from this new angle. This study is arranged as follows. First, it explicates ontological security in the context of Pakistan. Likewise, it elucidates how Afghanistan, the Red

Shirts Movement and the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement have created ontological insecurity in Pakistan. Further, it addresses why is it crucial for Pakistan to secure itself from the existential ontological security threats. Finally, the conclusion looks for some positive suggestions.

Literature review

We can broadly classify the extant literature on Pakistan's advocacy of the Afghan Taliban into two broader categories. The first group's scholars have covered the causes of the Afghan Taliban's advocacy. Why has Pakistan advocated the Taliban? Pakistan came into being in August 1947 based on Islamic ideology. Hasan-Askari Rizvi explains that Islam and supporting Islamic militants, Mujahedeen, or Taliban is a part of Pakistan's strategic culture (Rizvi, 2020). It is evident from the writings of some other prominent authors: Ahmad Rashid, Anatole Lieven, and Madiha Afzal, who mentioned in their books: "The Taliban," "Pakistan a Hard Country" and "Pakistan Under Siege," that Pakistan has backed the Mujahedeen or Taliban throughout its history.

Pakistan was more interested in the Taliban's reign because it firmly believed that the Taliban gave more preference to Islam than Pashtun identity. When Bengali ethnic nationalism peaked in 1971, it caused Pakistan to break apart, and East Pakistan, which was predominantly made up of Bengalis, was eventually able to secede from West Pakistan. Pakistan was, therefore, leery of Pashtun nationalism because it could not afford to lose another province. Several Afghani leaders had persistently incited Pashtun nationalism against Islamabad, but the Afghan Taliban's main concern was Islam; they just wanted to establish an Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. The state created madrassas (religious schools) in KPK in the 1970s. These madrassas' main goals were to advance Islamic nationalism and stifle Pashtun nationalism. These madrassas serve as the primary training grounds for the Afghan Taliban and Mujahedeen (Miller, 2021).

Similarly, the state used the mujahedeen during the Soviet-Afghan war (1979) and accomplished its goals. Onward the Soviet-Afghan war, Pakistan's policy-makers continued their support. During the 1990s, the Taliban controlled Kabul with Pakistan's assistance. Pakistan un-timely recognized them because it found an alternative for suppressing Pashtun nationalism in the form of Islamic nationalists and Taliban. Pakistan has started its advocacy at the international level. This advocacy of an extremist outfit depicts how much Pakistan was curious about the Taliban's regime. Likewise, after 20 years, back in 2021, when the Taliban 2.0 revival occurred, Pakistan started its advocacy at international forums to counter the rise of the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) and Pashtun nationalism. Pakistan has long viewed the Taliban and other Islamic forces as a strategic weapon or tool for its foreign and internal agendas. First, Pakistan used the mujahedeen as a strategic tool in Afghanistan. Later on, the Pakistani-backed Islamic militant outfits such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed in Kashmir against India (Khan, 2007).

Pakistan has advocated for the Afghan Taliban to pursue its strategic depth policy, halt Afghanistan from its claim over Pakistan's territories, and minimize India's influence in Afghanistan (Kleiner, 2014). Compared to other Afghani leaders, the Taliban are less interested in Pakistan's territories. Afghani rulers, from the beginning, supported the Pashtun nationalists and the idea of Pashtunistan. Muhammad Zahir Shah explicitly claimed Pakistan's territories.

The Afghan rulers backed the Pashtun nationalists and the notion of Pashtunistan against Islamabad.

On the other hand, the Taliban neither advocates for Pashtunistan nor has closer relations with the Pashtun Nationalists. In the same way, Pakistan believes that a government in Afghanistan that is friendly to India will endanger its existence, particularly during the confrontation between India and Pakistan. Pakistan, therefore, supports them. In conclusion, Pakistan's advocacy for the Taliban is essential to its foreign policy toward Afghanistan. Pakistan believes that the Taliban's rule in Afghanistan is the finest opportunity to further its national interests (Marvin G. Weinbaum & Jonathan B. Harder, 2008).

Moreover, the second group of the extant literature sheds light on the repercussions of the Taliban's advocacy for Pakistan. Various scholars have contributed to the extant literature and addressed almost every possible consequence of the Taliban's advocacy for Pakistan. These consequences include non-traditional security threats such as terrorism, extremism, and societal and security issues for Pakistan, like drug trafficking, narco-terrorism, and ethnic and sectarian violence (Ahmed, 2021).

Many extremists and terrorists from various militant groups, including the Taliban, Daesh, and others, have fled Afghanistan and strengthened their footholds in the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) and other regions of KPK after the Soviet-Afghan War and the 9/11 attack. They were involved in various terrorist activities (Fraser, 2019).

The creation of militant groups by some radicals, like Mullah Fazlullah, Sufi Muhammad, and Baitullah Mehsud, poses security threats to Pakistan. They also belong to the Deobandi movement. They attacked many shrines and the Shia sect in Pakistan, which increased sectarian conflict and disturbed society (Ahmed, 2012) Further, after the Soviets and the United States (US) attacked Afghanistan, cross-border migration started, resulting in an influx of refugees to Pakistan. They badly affected Pakistan's economy and increased drug trafficking in Pakistan (Akhtar, 2008).

Likewise, Pakistan received harsh international criticism and faced isolation internationally when it hastily recognized the Afghan Taliban regime in the 1990s. Its relationship with Iran, the Central Asian Republics, Russia, and China became complicated because the spillover effect of such militants threatened these states (Borthakur, 2017).

The extant literature has fundamentally dealt with the causes and consequences of the Afghan Taliban's advocacy. It elucidates different causes of the Taliban's advocacy. Instances include pursuing a policy of strategic depth to support a friendly regime in Afghanistan to minimize India's influence, to halt the claim of Afghanistan on Pakistan's territories, and to replace Pashtun nationalism with Islamic nationalism. In the same vein, it has covered different consequences, such as non-traditional security threats. For instance, extremism, terrorism, drug trafficking, narcoterrorism, etc. The existing literature has addressed these causes and consequences. However, there is a dearth of literature regarding Pakistan's advocacy of the Afghan Taliban to ensure its ontological security. The extant literature does not cover this cause. There is a gap that will be closed by this study.

Research objectives

The researchers did not cover Pakistan's advocacy of the Afghan Taliban from an ontological security perspective. This scholarship aims to fill this gap and address how Pakistan ensures its ontological security with the assistance of the Afghan Taliban, which other Afghani rulers and PTM threatened. In addition, this study highlights why Pakistan is dealing with iron hands with the PTM.

Research questions

- What is ontological security in the milieu of Pakistan?
- How have RSM, Afghanistan, and PTM threatened Pakistan's ontological security?
- Why is it important for Pakistan to secure itself from ontological security threats?

Methodology

This research is mainly based on the qualitative method. It is internet-based research, and the data has been collected from secondary sources such as journal articles, newspapers, magazines, books, etc. Similarly, data has also been collected from primary sources, i.e., speeches and Twitter accounts. Likewise, content and discourse analysis is done after data collection. This research is designed analytically. Moreover, this research is done through the deductive method.

Significance of the study

Advocacy of the Afghan Taliban is an indispensable part of Pakistan's foreign policy towards Afghanistan. Its irredentist claims on Pashtun areas of Pakistan, its support for Pashtun Nationalists, and its role in inciting Pashtun Nationalism against Islamabad (aims of Afghanistan) disturbed Pakistan's ontological security from the very onset. When Afghanistan became more ambitious during the 1970s to achieve its goals, Pakistan designed a counter-strategy of supporting the Islamist groups against Kabul to promote Islamic nationalism and subdue Pashtun nationalism across the Durand line.

Likewise, Pakistan found an essential ally in the form of the Taliban who could assist in its strategy of advancing Islamic nationalism. Therefore, when the Taliban controlled the throne of Kabul after the mid-1990s, Pakistan started its advocacy at the international level. Likewise, when Taliban 2.0 took over Kabul in 2021, Pakistan resumed its advocacy at different international forums to preserve its ontological security from different ontological security threats: PTM and Afghanistan. This research is significant because it elucidates Pakistan's advocacy of the Afghan Taliban from an ontological security theory perspective. Other scholars have explained various reasons for Pakistan's advocacy of Afghanistan except for ontological security. Likewise, this study will assist the researchers that why the state is dealing with iron hands with PTM and its leaders through the lens of ontological security.

Theoretical framework

Ontological security is an antithesis of physical security, which is the primary focus of the realist school of thought. Realism argues that states should ensure their physical security (Brain C, Tim Dune and Schmidt, 2014). Contrary to the security of the body, ontological security is defined as the "security of the self." According to the Ontological Security Theory (OST), states create specific foreign policies that help in the reproduction of their sense of self. In addition, states seek protection from anxieties that undermine their sense of self. It explains that all agents act to protect their sense of self and fundamentally need ontological security. Additionally, it explains that when a state's sense of self is in danger, they are likely to take some action to lessen the danger. Similarly, states develop the dominant narrative in opposition to the marginalized narrative because the latter can overturn the former (Will K Delehanty & Brent J Steele, 2009).

During Zia's rule, Pakistan established the dominant narrative—the Islamist vision and Jihadi Pakistan—to stifle the ontological security risks posed by Pashtunistan or a Greater Afghanistan. The advocacy of the Afghan Taliban is part of Pakistan's foreign policy toward Afghanistan. In doing so, it helps Pakistan maintain its ontological security. The majority of Afghanistan's government, except the Taliban, supported the notion of Greater Afghanistan and backed Pashtunistan and the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) that threatened Pakistan's ontological security, which is intolerable for Pakistan. Consequently, Pakistan was involved in Afghanistan and advocated for the Afghan Taliban to ease this ontological security threat. Pakistan has a basic need for ontological security. It is defending its sense of self by advocating for the Afghan Taliban.

Moreover, like physical security, Pakistan aims to protect its ontological security from threats like the PTM and its leaders, such as Manzoor Ahmad Pashteen and Ali Wazir, etc., that threaten its sense of identity. They are against the fencing of the Pak-Afghan border, and they do not consider the Durand Line as an international border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, which is a self-identity of Pakistan. Likewise, they are provoking Pashtun nationalism which is contrary to Islamic nationalism (Pakistan ontology).

Ontological security in the milieu of Pakistan

In the late 1950s, psychologist Ronald David Laing used the term "ontological security" in his book "The Divided Self." Many other scholars have also used this term in Psychology, Sociology, Political Science, and International Relations (IR). It refers to the security of the self, not the body. In 1999 through the work of Anthony Giddens, the concept of ontological security entered into IR. He employed this term in his study on the psyche of individuals. He said that, just like an individual, the state cares about its ontological security to keep a stable sense of "self." However, if a state's ontological security is in jeopardy, so will its physical survival (Krickel-Choi, 2021). Therefore, in addition to physical security, states also seek the security of the self; they preserve not only their national body but also their national identity.

The word "ontology" comes from the Greek word "ontos," which denotes existence or being, as we frequently say this thing exists. It is related to reality. For instance, Pakistan comprises four provinces: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Baluchistan, Sindh, and Punjab. It is the reality and ontology of Pakistan. Likewise, "security" means the state of being safe. Since Pakistan's existence or being is safe, it is ontologically safe. However, if other countries claim its territories or the nationalist movements threaten Pakistan's sense of self; this will create ontological insecurity for Pakistan.

An ontologically secure agent has a sense of presence in the world as alive and whole, according to R.D. Laing's explanation in his book "The Divided Self (Kinnvall, 2004; Zarakol, 2016). Pakistan has a sense of presence in the world as a whole, is alive, and is ontologically secure. However, some threats, i.e., Afghanistan and PTM, challenge its sense of presence as a whole and make it ontologically insecure.

From the very outset, Afghanistan has continually produced ontological security risks by claiming Pakistan's territories and inciting Pashtun nationalism against Islamabad. The Durand Line, which divides the Pashtun of Pakistan and Afghanistan, is also purportedly rejected by Afghanistan and the PTM, who assert that it is an imaginary line (Anon., 2020). This claim makes Pakistan ontologically insecure. The Taliban give primacy to Islam and have no ties to Pashtun nationalism. Therefore, Pakistan advocates for the Afghan Taliban to ensure its ontological security through them.

At an individual level, ontological security is an antecedent condition for human security. It refers to the psychological security of the self, and human security means the right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from fear and want. If individuals lack ontological security, they cannot live in freedom and dignity, free from fear and want. The same goes for the states. At the state level, states, i.e., Pakistan also care about its ontological security, which is an antecedent condition for its physical security(Shani, 2017).

States are trying to ensure their ontological security because insecurity can threaten their physical survival. For instance, if Pakistan cannot tackle PTM or Afghanistan, which are threatening its ontological security. It will not be able to secure its physical parts, i.e., Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan, and ultimately its physical existence will be at stake. Therefore, nation-states such as Pakistan can be considered ontological security-seeking agents in IR because they give their citizens an identity and a stable sense of self. The majority of modern states can be understood as ontological security-providing institutions for their citizens.

Furthermore, according to ontological security, foreign policy and international relations are also driven by concerns about maintaining the self rather than simply material interests. Pakistan can gain simple material interests from other Afghan governments; it can trade with Afghanistan, access Central Asia via Afghanistan, and take other benefits. However, Pakistan felt uncomfortable from the very beginning about Afghanistan's constant claim on Pakistan's territories and its role in provoking Pashtun nationalism. Therefore, Pakistan has had serious concerns from Afghanistan over maintaining its stable sense of self, which has allowed Pakistan to install a friendly regime in the form of the Taliban in Afghanistan. The Taliban assisted Pakistan in securing its ontological security, having no connections with Pashtun nationalism nor claimed Pakistan's Pashtun areas. Therefore, the advocacy of the Afghan Taliban became an

indispensable part of Pakistan's foreign policy toward Afghanistan. It depicts concerns about maintaining a "stable sense of self" drive states' foreign policies and international relations instead of simple material interests.

Moreover, to protect its ontological security, actors, such as states or policymakers, make policies that appear costly or even directly endanger their physical security (Pratt, 2017) When the Afghan Taliban took control of Kabul's throne in 1996, Pakistan soon became an advocate of the Afghan Taliban. Its policymakers have advocated for the Afghan Taliban to ensure the state's ontological security. Naseer-Ullah Babar, who was Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's and then Benazir Bhutto's leading advisor on Afghan matters, and Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman spoke out loudly in favour of the Taliban. Pakistan's policymakers have backed Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman, the protagonist of the Taliban in Pakistan, who provided support and assistance at various levels, i.e., diplomatic and financial. He went to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States, where he bagged handsome financial aid(Pratt, 2017). However, Pakistan paid the price for supporting the Taliban. It has faced severe consequences in the form of terrorism, extremism, isolation in the international community, and others. But it did not abandon its advocacy for the Afghan Taliban. In sum, states or policymakers cross every limit to ensure their ontological security.

Similarly, when the Taliban took over Kabul again in 2021, Pakistan resumed its advocacy. At that time, the former Premier had explicitly advocated for the Taliban at various international forums, including the UN, OIC, and others (Anon., 2021; Anon., 2021). Consequently, Pakistan faced severe consequences, i.e., a revival of TTP in different parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the rise of Pashtun Nationalism. Nevertheless, it perpetuates their advocacy because Pakistan and its policymakers firmly believe that the Taliban is the only force in Afghanistan through which we can ensure our ontological security.

Further, ontological theorists argue that a harmful relationship can provide ontological security to states. For instance, Pakistan's relationship with the Taliban is harmful, but it provides ontological security to Pakistan by not supporting PTM or claiming Pakistan's territories. Likewise, most states deem the Taliban terrorists, extremists, and human rights violators. They believe Pakistan supports such extremists. Historically, when the Taliban came into power in 1996, Pakistan was the first state to recognize Mullah Omar's reign in Kabul. As a result, it faced severe criticism and isolation but did not abandon its relationship with the Taliban permanently (Mitzen, 2006). Likewise, one of the reasons for keeping Pakistan on the grey list of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) was the backing of such terrorist outfits.

Moreover, because of maintaining its relationship with the Taliban, Pakistan's role in the Global War on Terror, wherein it faced humongous human and economic loss, became suspicious. The Trump administration vocally blamed Pakistan for playing a dubious game (Anon., 2018). In brief, Pakistan's relationship with the Taliban is harmful, but it provides an ontological security to Pakistan.

According to the proponents of ontological security, an individual's identity or sense of self is formed and sustained through relationships. Individuals achieve their ontological security by routinizing their relations with others. This argument is equally applicable to states. For instance, Pakistan has an identity that is comprised of different provinces; to sustain this identity,

it routinized its relations with the Afghan Taliban, who do not challenge its identity vis-à-vis other Afghan governments. Therefore, due to this reason, it advocates for the Taliban.

Ontological security threats to Pakistan

Islamic nationalism is the cornerstone of Pakistan's ontology, and it cannot afford other nationalism, i.e., Pashtun nationalism. Throughout its history, Pakistan has faced several ontological security threats; three of them are Afghanistan, the Red Shirts Movement (RSM), and the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM). They continually threaten Pakistan's ontology by provoking Pashtun nationalism. Afghanistan plays a crucial role in backing these types of Movements against Islamabad. From the very onset, the RSM had posed a more significant ontological security threat to Pakistan, and Afghanistan became a staunch supporter of the RSM. The RSM succeeded to a greater extent in uniting the Pashtuns against Islamabad. However, with time, the state suppressed the Pashtun nationalist sentiments with the help of Islamic nationalism and successfully neutralized the RSM.

Likewise, When the PTM emerged; it directly threatened the ontological security of Pakistan like RSM. Consequently, Pakistan tagged PTM as an anti-Pakistan movement and designed different counter-strategies to tackle it. The best strategy, it found, was to back the Taliban and advance Islamic nationalism to subdue Pashtun nationalism on both sides of the Durand Line. First, this study will explain how the RSM and Afghanistan initially threatened Pakistan's ontological security. Then it will shed light on PTM as an ontological security threat to Pakistan.

Afghanistan and Red Shirts Movement (RSM) as an ontological security threat

The British Empire and Russia declared Afghanistan a buffer state in the nineteenth century. The Durand Line divided the Pashtunistan region into two parts in 1893. Pakistan controls one part, and Afghanistan controls the other. As a result, Afghanistan no longer has access to the warm waters of the Arabian Sea (Tehseen, 2021). From the outset, the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have been in turmoil because Afghanistan has repeatedly threatened Pakistan's ontological security by claiming Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Baluchistan, and some territories of Punjab. Since Pakistan's independence, Afghanistan has repeatedly rejected the Durand Line as an international border and deemed it an imaginary line.

For strategic reasons, Afghanistan claimed Baluchistan belonged to Pashtunistan. Because it was landlocked, it wanted to gain access to the Indian Ocean. Likewise, Kabul intervenes actively in the politics of the NWFP to advance its claims. In addition, the Pashtun resistance groups against Islamabad had been financed and organized by the Afghan government's ministry of frontier and tribal affairs. Conversely, Pakistan has backed resistance movements in Afghanistan to weaken the Afghan government. Afghanistan had repeatedly demanded from Pakistan that Pashtuns be given the right to self-determination. It supported the Pashtunistan question and the right to self-determination of the Pashtuns beyond the Duran line. Likewise, it gives asylum, citizenship, and sanctuaries to the Pashtun nationalists such as Abdul Ghaffar Khan, who was demanding autonomous Pashtunistan, Ajmal Khattak and Ayyub Achakzai, and others had taken shelter in Afghanistan (Kalsoom Hanif, Saima Butt, Sadia Ashraf, 2021).

Additionally, the dispute over Pashtunistan between Pakistan and Afghanistan nearly resulted in war in 1955, 1961, and 1977. Zahir Shah demanded the reintegration of Pashtunistan into Afghanistan in 1955, and Afghanistan released a map depicting NWFP as a part of Afghanistan in 1969. In the same vein, it claims that Baluchistan is a part of Pashtunistan (SCHETTER, 2013). The RSM, which Afghanistan supported, was founded because of anti-British sentiments in the 1920s and 1930s. Moreover, the RSM triumphed in the 1937 and 1946 provincial elections. However, it had boycotted the referendum held by the British government in 1947 and started an explicit demand for an independent Pashtunistan, particularly in the Bannu Declaration, on the eve of partition. They argued that the referendum did not contain the option of an independent Pashtunistan or accession to Afghanistan. It boycotted the referendum held by the British to legally hand over the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and the adjacent tribal areas, known as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), to Pakistan. The Pashtun nationalists and Afghanistan opposed the creation of Pakistan.

The Pakistani leaders consequently questioned Ghaffar Khan and Wali Khan's loyalty to Pakistan. When Pakistan came into being in 1947, its government did not fully trust the Pashtun elites and mistreated the RSM and its leaders. Later, the movement's leaders changed their stance from secession and separation to provincial autonomy. Initially, the demand for a separate state was outside its priorities. Following the partition of British India, it demanded the creation of a sovereign state of Pashtunistan, posing an ontological security threat to Pakistan. Pakistan later imprisoned Abdul Ghaffar Khan and other Pashtun nationalists due to their persistent incitement of Pashtun nationalism, which was against Pakistan's ontology (Islamic nationalism).

As the government arrested Pashtun nationalist leaders like Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Abdul Samad Achakzai during the rule of Ayyub Khan, Afghanistan more vocally condemned the arrest of these leaders (Khalil, 2017). Moreover, Pakistan has successfully minimized its ontological security threat (Pashtun nationalism) by recruiting Pashtun elites into its central administration. The state becomes more inclusive and includes the Pashtun military-bureaucratic elite from Peshawar, Mardan, Kohat, and Bannu in the power structure (Hussain, 2018) The state allowed Pashtun elites access to its central institutions. The state's legitimacy has grown because of its inclusivity. In addition, Pakistan has long meddled in Afghan politics, mainly to tackle Pashtun nationalism and the Durand Line issue.

To sum up, soon after Pakistan's birth, Afghanistan and RSM posed a more significant ontological security threat to Pakistan by inciting Pashtun nationalism, which was against Pakistan's ontology (Islamic nationalism), against Islamabad, and demanding an independent Pashtunistan. Likewise, Afghanistan rejected the Durand Line (Pakistan's identity) as an international border between Pakistan and Afghanistan and claimed Pakistan's territories (Pakistan's existence).

Pashtun Tahafuz (Protection) Movement (PTM) as an ontological security threat

This section will explain how PTM emerged and how it threatened Pakistan's ontological security. Further, it will explicate the state's measures towards PTM for securing its ontology.

Jennifer Mitzen argues that by maintaining routine behaviours, the state preserves its ontological security (Mitzen, 2006). A robust military institution is one of the routine behaviours

of Pakistan. Suppose a state, movement, or individual tries to disturb this routine behaviour. In that case, they jeopardize Pakistan's ontological security because routine behaviours are critical for maintaining ontological security. Likewise, Pakistan's ontology is based on Islamic nationalism, and it cannot afford other nationalism. If a state, movement, or individual tries to promote nationalism other than Islam, they threaten Pakistan's ontology. The PTM challenges Pakistan's ontological security by provoking Pashtun nationalism and lambasting the Pakistani army.

The PTM draws inspiration from Bacha Khan's Red Shirts Movement (RSM). It originated in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and spread throughout KPK and Baluchistan. Besides, the war on terror and the Soviet-Afghan war (1979) took place in the FATA region. The region became more militarized and Talibanized because of these wars. Historically, the state has deprived the FATA region of political, economic, and social rights. The Pakistani military launched large-scale operations in this area during the war on terror. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) have emerged due to the FATA's unstable conditions. On January 13, 2018, Naqeebullah Mehsud, an internally displaced person (IDP), was allegedly killed in a police encounter in Karachi. This extra Judicial killing enraged the whole Pashtun community. The Mehsud clan member Manzoor Ahmad Pashteen and his friend decided to start protests over their friend's murder and seek justice for him at that time. Due to this very reason, they marched from Dera Ismail Khan to Islamabad. After the 2018 ten days Islamabad set in, the PTM gained prominence. Mehsud Tahafuz Movement (MTM), founded by Manzoor Pashteen in 2014 at Gomal University in D.I. Khan, was its previous name. Later, though, the name was changed from MTM to PTM (SARAH ELEAZAR AND SHER ALI KHAN, 2018).

The PTM's leaders, ManzoorPashteen and Ali Wazir followed in the great Bacha Khan's footsteps and adopted his nonviolent approach, which was quite successful. It persuaded Pakistan's most powerful institution, the army, to talk. Additionally, it satisfied its demands (putting an end to Watan Cards, decreasing the number of check-posts, and others). At first, PTM had a moderate tone. But over time, its strategy shifted from being conciliatory to being combative. It preferred public gatherings in Pakistan's major cities to hold talks with the army. Later, the PTM leaders' words and attitudes toward the government became more hostile. They lambasted the state and its institutions.

PTM challenged the status quo of the Pakistani army. It made some serious allegations against the Pakistani army. For instance, it blamed the army and held it responsible for the massive death toll of Pashtuns during the war on terror. In the same way, the army was blamed for helping militant groups that did terrorist acts on Pashtun land. Manzoor Pashteen, the leader of the PTM, claims, "The Pakistani army unleashed the Taliban to derail our cause." At their gatherings, the PTM also chanted, "The men in uniform (the Pakistan Army) are behind the terrorism"(Shah, 2020).

Further, during his speech in Peshawar in March 2019, Manzoor Pashteen blamed the Pak army for devising plots to create insecurity in KPK, bringing Mullah Fazlullah to Swat, instead of doing military operations to loot the resources, i.e., Zamrud (emerald) for establishing cantonments (Anon., 2019). Likewise, Ali Wazir, a prominent leader of PTM, shared the same view as Manzoor Pashteen and blamed the army for creating its agents (militants) among the Pashtuns during his speech in Peshawar in 2018.

DG ISPR Major-General AsifGhafoor warned the PTM not to cross the limit (Anon., 2019) In April 2019; he stated that the PTM is a foreign-funded movement collecting funds from around the world. He further addressed the PTM that tells us how much funds you have collected from the Afghan National Directorate of Security (NDS) and Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) to run your campaign against Islamabad (Anon., 2019).

Moreover, the PTM has a network of coordinators at the national and international levels. They want to increase support for Pashtun rights on a global scale (Jafri, 2021). The Afghani fully exploit these networks to spread disinformation about the Pakistani army and government. For instance, Afghani supporters in the PTM gathering abroad use abusive language against the Pak army, which is a routine behaviour of Pakistan. In this way, Afghani used the PTM platforms and threatened Pakistan's ontological security by disturbing its routine behaviour.

Robust military institution is one of the foremost routine behaviours of Pakistan. If someone tries to pose a threat to this institution, it means it is disturbing Pakistan's ontological security. Therefore, Pakistan is using all available resources against the PTM to ensure its ontological security. The state response to the PTM was intense. It tagged the PTM as a foreign-funded movement against the state.

Besides, PTM leaders sparked Pashtun nationalism. They directly threatened Pakistan's ontology (Islamic nationalism) by provoking Pashtun nationalism. Manzoor Pashteen tried to promote Pashtun nationalism on both sides of the Durand line, which contradicts Pakistan's ontology (Islamic nationalism). Likewise, he lambasted the state's policy of advocating the Taliban, through which Pakistan preserves its ontological security and subdues Pashtun nationalism. It is evident from his April 11, 2018, interview with DW News in which he stated that if the Pakistani state abandoned its good and bad Taliban policy, Afghanistan's Pashtun would take a sigh of relief.

Similarly, the PTM has different social media teams for propagating their demands. However, the hostile neighbouring states, particularly Afghanistan, have exploited the social media accounts, i.e., Twitter and Facebook, and challenged Pakistan's ontological security by inciting Pashtun nationalism through "*Larao bar yao Afghan" slogans.* Moreover, PTM allowed Afghanistan to interfere in Pakistan's internal affairs. For instance, when the state arrested Manzoor Pashteen for breaching Pakistan's ontology through his hate speeches, Afghan President, Ashraf Ghani, tweeted in support of Manzoor Pashteen, which depicts Afghanistan's interference in Pakistan's internal affairs. He tweeted on Twitter, "I fully support the historical Pashtun Long March in Pakistan, and I am troubled by the arrest of Manzoor Pashteen and his colleagues."

Besides, the Ghani government had lauded the PTM long march, and Kabul's parliament even called the government to help the protestors in Pakistan. In several cities of Afghanistan: Kandahar, Jalalabad, and Kabul, rallies have been held supporting PTM. The Ghani government tried to exploit the PTM and exert pressure on Islamabad for its gains by supporting the PTM's demonstrations (Shams, 2018). Pakistan deemed the PTM a more significant ontological security threat because it is uniting the Pashtuns across the Durand Line and fears that it will re-invigorate the historic ontological security threat, the demand of Pashtunistan.

From the outset, Pashtun nationalism, Afghanistan's territorial claims, and the Pashtunistan issue contributed to Pakistan's ontological instability. However, with time, Pakistan secured itself from such ontological security threats. The PTM has attempted to reinvigorate trans-border Pashtun nationalism and proclaimed *Lar ao bar yao* Afghan (low-land Pashtuns of Pakistan and high-land Pashtuns of Afghanistan are one Afghans). These efforts of PTM have invigorated Pakistan's ontological security threats (Afghanistan claims on Pakistan territories and Pashtun nationalism). Therefore, PTM and its leaders received harsh treatment from the authorities.

Afghani reckons Pakistan is wholly responsible for the destruction of Afghanistan since the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan. It had not accepted Pakistan as an independent state. Moreover, it was eager to eliminate Pakistan from the global map. It claimed Pakistan's territories and declared the Pashtun areas of Pakistan as occupied Pakhtunkhwa. Afghanistan was looking for an opportunity to disintegrate Pakistan, and the PTM provided such an opportunity. In the disguise of PTM, Afghanistan tried to destabilize Pakistan by inciting Pashtuns against Islamabad as it did in the era of Zahir Shah and Daoud Khan. The Afghan diaspora had used the PTM platforms, accused Pak-army, and raised different slogans against Pakistan, due to which Pakistan's ontological security was threatened. The Afghan narrative matches with the PTM. They are using abusive language about the Pak army, claiming that the Pak army is behind the terrorism, and both are appealing for Pashtun nationalism on both sides of the Durand line.

The state has dealt with the movement with an iron hand and taken various steps to ensure its ontological security. For instance, it banned PTM activities and launched the Pakistan Protection Movement to counter Pashtun nationalism and promoted Pakistani nationalism; PTM leaders were jailed for breaching the state's ontological security.

In conclusion, PTM is a grave ontological security threat to Pakistan because it provokes Pashtun nationalism. Pakistan cannot afford other nationalism than Islamic nationalism, a foundational stone of Pakistan's ontology. Likewise, to safeguard ontological security, maintenance of routine behaviours is crucial for a state. The PTM is disturbing one of the routine behaviours of Pakistan (robust military institution). It is ostensibly lambasting the Pak army and explicitly challenging its status quo. Therefore, Pakistan deems PTM as an ontological security threat.

Why is it significant for Pakistan to secure itself from the ontological security threat?

Pakistan is comprised of different ethnic groups, but its identity and ontology are based on Islamic Nationalism. This nationalism was promoted by the state throughout its history, mainly to tackle other nationalism like Baloch nationalism and Pashtun nationalism.

As discussed earlier, ontological security is an antecedent condition for human security, which means the right of people to live in freedom and dignity and free from fear and want. If individuals lack ontological security, they will not be able to live in freedom and dignity, free from fear and want. Similarly, states also care about their ontological security, which is an antecedent of their physical security (Shani, 2017).

Pakistan must safeguard its ontological security because ontological insecurity can threaten its physical survival. If Pakistan cannot tackle PTM or Afghanistan, which are threatening its ontological security. It will not be able to secure its physical parts, i.e., Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan, and ultimately its physical existence will be at stake. Therefore, Pakistan needs to secure itself from ontological security threats (Afghanistan and PTM). With the rise of PTM, Pashtun nationalism arose against the state. The PTM establishes the same narrative as RSM. The leaders of PTM claim that it is a Punjabi-dominated Pakistan. The Punjabi army is exploiting the KPK's resources to create their cantonments. Likewise, they claim that the Punjabi generals are responsible for insecurity and terrorism in KPK. Further, the Afghanis are also playing their part in the propaganda against Pakistan.

Historically, Afghanistan and RSM have challenged Pakistan's ontological security. Afghanistan claimed Pakistan's Pashtun territories and declared such territories as occupied Pakhtunkhwa. Similarly, the RSM opposed the Punjabi-dominated establishment and sought the emancipation of Pashtuns from Punjabis by establishing a separate state known as Pashtunistan or accession to Afghanistan, a Pashtun-dominated state.

In the Bannu declaration, RSM explicitly demanded Pashtunistan or accession to Afghanistan. After initially opposing Pakistan's creation, the RSM and Ghaffar Khan began to support the idea of Pashtunistan as an independent Pashtun country. (Khan, Raja Qaiser Ahmed and Rafiullah, 2022).

With time, Pakistan tackled these ontological security threats for two main reasons: first, the state became inclusive and incorporated the Pashtun elites from different cities of KPK into the power structure. The state elites increasing power-sharing with the Pashtun elites led to the decline of the Pashtunistan movement. Second, when Afghanistan incited Pashtun nationalism against Islamabad, particularly during the 1970s, Pakistan, under the Bhutto reign, invited the Islamist leader of Afghanistan, GulbuddinHekmatyar, and promoted Islamic nationalism on both sides of the Durand line to subdue Pashtun nationalism. Later on, Pakistan withdrew its support from him and advocated for the Afghan Taliban to advance Islamic nationalism and suppress Pashtun nationalism.

The 18th amendment was introduced in 2010. Wherein the name of North West Frontier Province (NWFP) changed to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and gave provincial autonomy to Pashtuns. Consequently, Pashtun nationalism (ontological security threat) almost vanished.

Moreover, at the start of the 1970s, when Bengali ethnic nationalism, which was against Pakistan's ontology (Islamic nationalism), reached its peak, it resulted in the break of Pakistan and East Pakistan, which was mostly comprised of Bengali, successfully gained independence from West Pakistan.

In both the cases of Pashtun nationalism and Bengali nationalism, the state reacted differently. The state response to the former was more coherent and inclusive. However, ignoring the latter, which was backed by India, resulted in Pakistan's physical insecurity. This physical insecurity eventually led to the break of Pakistan. Therefore, the state needs to tackle the PTM movement (ontological security threat) with a coherent strategy. Suppose the state did not design a coherent strategy for this movement and take it lightly as it took Bengali ethnic nationalism. In that case, it can pose a grave threat to its physical security, as the Bengalis posed during the

1970s. Likewise, suppose PTM becomes successful in uniting the Pashtuns against Islamabad. In that case, it will create a spillover effect in the state, which can give rise to Baluch nationalism and Sindhi nationalism and can create severe problems for Pakistan. Therefore, it is essential for Pakistan to secure itself from ontological security threats.

Conclusion

Afghanistan's irredentist claims on Pakistan's territories, inciting Pashtun nationalism against Islamabad, and the Red Shirts Movement (RSM) demand of Pashtunistan or accession to Afghanistan in the Bannu declaration posed initial ontological security threats to the nascent state of Pakistan. However, it dealt with such threats through different strategies. For instance, it has promoted Islamic nationalism across the Durand Line through GulbuddinHekmatyar and the Taliban. To counter Afghanistan's strategy of provoking Pashtun nationalism against Islamabad, Pakistan advocated the Afghan Taliban throughout its history at different international forums to advance Islamic nationalism and subdue Pashtun nationalism because the Taliban vis-à-vis other Afghani leaders preferred Islam to Pashtun identity. Likewise, to tackle Pashtun nationalists, the state became more inclusive and incorporated the Pashtun elites from different cities of KPK into the power structure of Pakistan. Moreover, it introduced the 18th amendment in 2010, which fulfilled the basic demands of the Pashtun nationalists, i.e., provincial autonomy and the name of "Khyber Pakhtunkhwa." This amendment led to the decline of Pashtun Nationalism (ontological security threat).

Until the emergence of PTM, which threatened Pakistan's ontological security, the state successfully dealt with Pashtun nationalism. However, when the PTM started lambasting the state and its powerful institution (Pak-army), the state dealt with the PTM with iron hands. It banned PTM activities, restrained the mainstream media from its coverage, accused it of a foreign-funded movement, and put its leaders, i.e., Ali Wazir, behind bars. Instead of suppressing the voice of the PTM through force, the state should pay greater attention to its overall demands. Although the PTM's behaviour towards the state is aggressive and threatens its ontological security, the state should negotiate with the PTM leaders and halt portraying PTM as anti-state because it will further raise the animosity between the state and PTM. This animosity can be exploited by the neighbouring hostile states, which can create more significant problems for Pakistan. Therefore, Pakistan needs to secure itself from PTM (ontological security threat) through a coherent strategy because if it succeeds in uniting the Pashtuns, it will create a spillover effect in the state. In addition, the Baluch and Sindhi nationalism will draw inspiration from PTM, creating ontological insecurity for Pakistan, and eventually leading to its physical insecurity.

Further, Pakistan should not interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan and should abandon the Taliban's advocacy because the TTP draws inspiration from them and challenges Pakistan's physical Security. Therefore, Pakistan should focus on its citizens. It should fulfil its social contract with Pashtun citizens. When the state provides every legal right to Pashtuns, no power in Afghanistan can incite these Pashtuns against Islamabad. Moreover, there will be no need for the Taliban's advocacy for subduing Pashtun nationalism. This way, Pakistan can preserve its ontological security from Afghanistan and PTM.

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