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Abstract

The study investigates the pervasive impact of Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) on the political, economic, and social perspectives of Pakistan. These criminal syndicates, often operating across borders, exploit weak governance structures and generate significant challenges for the country. Politically, TCOs exacerbate corruption, fuel instability, and undermine state authority through bribery, coercion, and influence over local and national leadership. Economically, these organizations disrupt legitimate markets, facilitate money laundering, and contribute to an underground economy that stifles growth and development. Socially, the presence of TCOs leads to increased violence, lawlessness, and erosion of community structures, contributing to social inequality and insecurity. The study aims to explore the multifaceted effects of TCOs on Pakistan, providing insights into the complexities of governance, security, and development in a globalized world, and offering policy recommendations to mitigate their influence.

Keywords: Transnational Criminal Organizations, Political, Economic and Social Perspectives

1. Introduction

Transnational Criminal Organizations (TOC), refer to the coordination of criminal activities across national boundaries in which markets or groups of individuals operate in multiple countries to devise and carry out unlawful operations (Williams, 2001). Transnational criminal activities encompass three overarching classifications: the distribution of illicit products (e.g., counterfeiting, drug trafficking, and weapons trafficking); the provision of illegal services (e.g., human trafficking and commercial sex); and the infiltration of government and business (e.g., fraud, extortion, money laundering, and corruption). These crimes have the potential to impact numerous nations. It is important to comprehend the workings of these networks in a collection for successfully dealing with international crimes (Elliott, 2016). Transnational crime networks (TCN) pose a significant and growing threat to national and international security, with dire implications for public safety, public health, democratic institutions, and economic stability across the globe. Not only are criminal networks expanding, but they also are diversifying their activities, resulting in the convergence of once distinct threats that today have explosive and destabilizing effects (Watson et al., 2021).

Developing countries like Pakistan with weak rule of law can be particularly susceptible to TCN penetration. The apparent growing nexus in some states among TCN groups and elements of government including intelligence services and high-level business figures represents a significant threat to economic growth and democratic institutions. In countries with weak governance, some corrupt officials turn a blind eye to TCN activity (Lindstaedt et al., 2021). TCN insinuate themselves in the political process in a variety of ways. This is often accomplished through direct bribery (but also by having members run for office); setting up shadow economies; infiltrating financial and security sectors through coercion or corruption; and positioning themselves as alternate providers of governance, security, services, and livelihoods. As they expand, TCN networks may threaten stability and undermine free markets as they build alliances with political leaders, financial institutions, law enforcement, foreign intelligence, and security agencies. TCN penetration of governments is exacerbating corruption and undermining governance, the rule of law, judicial systems, free press, democratic institution-building, and transparency (Chouvy, 2010).

The Global Competitiveness Report 2019, World Economic Forum ranks Pakistan at 112 out of 141 countries in transnational crime. Likewise, according to the World Justice Project, rule of law index 2019, Pakistan is ranked 117 out of 126 economies surveyed. Pakistan is geographically vulnerable to drug trafficking, sharing a 2,430 km-long, porous border with Afghanistan, the world's largest producer of illicit opium. UNODC estimates that Pakistan is now the destination and transit country for approximately 43% of the opiates produced in Afghanistan. Pakistan is also a source, transit and destination country for human trafficking and is categorized as Tier 2. There were 296 terrorist attacks in Pakistan in 2019. Pakistan is also on the Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) grey list. 55000 cases of cybercrimes were registered in Lahore alone in 2018. Bank Islami lost 6 M \$ within 23 minutes in a cyber-attack. Transnational Organized Crime (TOC) poses a substantial and acute threat to the state of security in Pakistan (Schwab, 2018). The law enforcement apparatus for TOC is stretched and faces challenges on many fronts. The response to TOC is often kinetic due to these challenges. The need for a structured policy approach is critical to inform law enforcement agencies for effectively tackling TOC, which affects the lives of millions at home and abroad.

1.1. Transnational Criminal Organizations and Drug Trafficking

Drug trafficking among Pakistan Iran, Afghanistan, India and China has turned into a critical phase because of their common border and the travel courses that work with the development of opiates. As per a report by the Unified Countries Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the permeable border between the two nations has empowered the trafficking of narcotics, especially heroin, from Afghanistan into Iran and onward to international business sectors. This illegal trade not only represents a danger to the soundness and security of the two countries but also adds to the global drug trade. Besides, the complex financial elements, including neediness and joblessness, fuel the issue, of the contribution to drug trafficking for the job. Drug trafficking among Pakistan and shared-border nations significantly impacts the national security of Pakistan, fuelling different security challenges. As per a study by the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), the convergence of drugs across the border adds to the expansion of organized crime, subsidizing psychological oppressor exercises, and cultivating unsteadiness in the locale. The permeable border works with the development of opiates as well as weapons and aggressors, presenting huge threats to inner security. Moreover, the drug trade powers corruption inside law enforcement agencies and subverts governance, debilitating state organizations' ability to battle other security threats (Gallagher, 2010).

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1.2. Transnational Criminal Organizations and Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a significant humanitarian issue in Pakistan and its neighbouring countries: India, Iran, Afghanistan, and China. It involves the exploitation and abuse of vulnerable individuals. As per a report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Pakistan serves as both an origin and transit country for human trafficking, with individuals being subjected to forced labour and sexual exploitation.¹² The permeable borders with adjoining nations, for example, Afghanistan and Iran work with development, frequently dishonestly. Financial weaknesses, including neediness, absence of education, and orientation imbalance, contribute to defenselessness to trafficking plans. Social and ethnic ties among shared-border nations muddle endeavours to battle trafficking, as hoodlums exploit this border connectivity to stay away from detection (Zimmerman & Kiss, 2017). The transnational idea of trafficking networks highlights the requirement for improved cooperation among law enforcement agencies. Powerful measures require strong legitimate structures, comprehensive help administrations for survivors, and reinforced border controls (International Labour Organization, 2017).

1.3. Transnational Criminal Organizations and Weapons Trafficking

A fundamental security challenge, with implications for national and global security, is the trafficking of weapons between Pakistan and its primarily anticipated border states. According to a report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Pakistan is considered to be one of the leading arms traders globally, with a significant portion of these weapons potentially being diverted to illegal business zones. The porous borders that extended to Iran and Afghanistan facilitated the smuggling of weapons, thereby impeding the proliferation of weaponry in the area (Martínez Hernández, 2024). The ongoing conflict in Afghanistan has also encouraged the amassing of enormous weapons, which has further fueled the illegal arms trade. A study by the Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) measures that over 60% of unlawful arms entering Pakistan start from connecting Afghanistan, highlighting the immense degree of weapon trafficking along the common border. According to data from the Pakistan Customs and law enforcement agencies, there were more than 500 cases of unlawful arms seizures along the common borders especially the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in a year, which demonstrates the repeat and size of unlawful arms trafficking works. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has determined that Pakistan serves as a prevalent transit nation for illicit firearms, with regular interceptions of contraband weapons occurring in the border areas. Likewise, the presence of corruption among law enforcement agencies and inadequate border control processes contribute to the facilitation of weapon trafficking. (Jan, 2022). To effectively combat weapon trafficking, it is crucial to emphasize the transnational nature of this unlawful trade and the necessity for increased collaboration among adjacent nations and international law agencies (Arsovska, 2014).

1.4. Transnational Criminal Organizations and Intellectual Property Theft

Intellectual Property (IP) burglary in Pakistan by shared-border nations because of transnational crime networks represents a critical danger to the country's economic advantages and innovation environment. As indicated by a report by the Intellectual Property Organization of Pakistan (IPO), occurrences of IP burglary, including falsifying and robbery, have been on the ascent, with adjoining nations, for example, China and India distinguished as key wellsprings of illegally imitated merchandise and protected materials (Mujtaba, 2023). The permeable borders and frail enforcement instruments fuel the difficulties of battling IP robbery, permitting transnational crime networks to work without risk of punishment. Insights from the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) show that Pakistan loses billions of dollars every year because of IP encroachment, with fake items flooding nearby business sectors and sabotaging real organizations. Besides, research by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) features the unfavorable impacts of IP robbery on innovation and unfamiliar speculation, smothering economic development and development possibilities. The transnational idea of IP burglary networks additionally entangles enforcement endeavours, requiring improved cooperation and coordination among law enforcement agencies across borders.

1.5. Transnational Criminal Organizational and Cybercrime

Cybercrime in Pakistan has developed essentially because of the impact of transnational crime networks and the jobs of adjoining nations, introducing a mind-boggling security challenge. The developing pervasiveness of cybercrimes is credited to progress in innovation and the rising dependence on advanced stages for different exercises (Dawes, 2020). Besides, the interconnectedness of crimes across borders, as featured by Interpol, fuels the cyber danger landscape. Adjoining nations, for example, China and India, assume a critical role in cybercrime exercises targeting Pakistan (Islam et al., 2019). Measurements from the Cybercrime Wing of the Government Investigation Organisation (FIA) show a sharp ascent in cybercrimes lately, with an absence of computerized scientific mastery and deficient frameworks fuelling the difficulties. Additionally, minimized minorities and outcasts, as mentioned by the Organised Crime File, are especially powerless against cyber exploitation. Adjoining nations like China and India assume critical roles in cybercrime exercises targeting Pakistan (Jahan, 2023).

2. Problem Statement

Transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) are highly organized networks that operate across national borders, engaging in illicit activities such as drug trafficking, human smuggling, money laundering, arms trafficking, and organized violence. These activities have increasingly infiltrated both developing and developed countries, causing widespread disruption to the rule of law, economic stability, and social cohesion. In Pakistan, a country situated at the crossroads of Central and South Asia, the influence of TCOs has exacerbated existing political, economic, and social vulnerabilities. The porous borders with neighboring countries, including Afghanistan, Iran, and India, have made Pakistan a prime target for transnational criminal activities. As a result, the country faces numerous challenges in combating these networks, which not only fuel corruption and undermine governmental authority but also have far-reaching consequences on national security and development. Politically, TCOs often exploit weak governance structures and corruption to influence decision-making, disrupt democratic processes, and contribute to state instability. Economically, their illicit activities strain resources, diminish investor confidence, and hinder growth in key sectors such as trade and infrastructure. Socially, the detrimental effects of TCOs are felt in terms of increased violence, the breakdown of social order, and the rise in drug addiction and organized crime, all of which undermine the fabric of Pakistani society. The pervasive influence of these criminal organizations poses a serious threat to Pakistan's political stability, economic prosperity, and social harmony. Understanding the

mechanisms through which TCOs operate and the multi-dimensional impacts they have on Pakistan's political, economic, and social landscapes is crucial for formulating effective policy responses to mitigate their adverse effects.

3. Transnational Criminal Organizations and Pakistan

Transnational criminal organizations networks or transnational organised crimes pose a significant threat to the economic improvement of Pakistan, the security of prominent urban areas, and the nation as a whole (Lindstaedt, 2021). Utilizing Pakistan's Global Organised Crime Index (2021) as a point of reference is crucial for comprehending the nature and scope of organised crime. This index assesses criminal activity, black markets, and other illicit activities in Pakistan. Six key findings have been identified in the research. Asia is home to the highest crime rates in the world, with over 75% of the global population residing in countries with high crime rates. Human trafficking is one of the most pervasive illicit global markets. Democracies are more resilient to organised crime than authoritarian nations. State actors are crucial in the struggle against the support of illicit economies and the ensuing human trafficking. Organised crime is extremely hazardous when it exists in states that are unstable and damaged with conflict. Pakistan is ranked 29th out of 193 countries, indicating a high level of vulnerability and low level of resilience to transnational or organised crime. The current peril that the entire nation is grappling with is of a magnitude that exceeds its capacity to contain. Criminal markets that hold significant importance in Pakistan encompass those that pertain to unlawful activities, the trafficking of non-renewable resources, human trafficking, and important crimes. The majority of criminal organisations in Pakistan are state-affiliated organisations, mafia-like gang structures, and loosely interconnected criminal networks. These actors perform crucial roles in the spheres of politics, economics, and governance. Pakistan's resilience to organised crime is rated as moderate after receiving a grade of four out of 193 for overall effectiveness. The legal system, leadership and policies of law enforcement, transparency and accountability, support for victims and witnesses, anti-law enforcement capabilities, regulatory capacity, territorial integrity, prevention, non-state actors, inter-state cooperation, organised crime, and money laundering are just a few of the areas in which Pakistan's efforts to combat organised crime fall short (Chouvy, 2010).

Pakistan faces significant challenges in combating organised crime due to its exceptionally low levels of resilience and defensive capabilities, which are the lowest in the world. Pakistan encompasses four main kinds of criminal activity: arms trafficking, human trafficking, drug trafficking, and organised crime. The crucial role of government agencies in promoting and discouraging unlawful firms, as this significantly affects the resilience of organised crime. Owing to the widespread corruption and lack of accountability in the country, Pakistan's adherence to the rule of law is not as robust as it has the potential to be. The collaboration of machine learning and funding from terrorist organisations poses a significant global threat to the country. Pakistan has voluntarily participated in the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC) review to assess its efforts in combating organised crime and its compliance with FATF regulations on preventing money laundering and terrorist financing. The study also emphasizes other recent advancements in Pakistan.

According to the Global Organised Crime Index 2021, Pakistan is significantly aiding efforts to combat organised crime. To address the issue, the essay emphasized the necessity of adopting a comprehensive approach that considers money laundering, corruption, and illicit financial flow. Both the United States of America and the Taliban in Afghanistan successfully combated transnational crime networks. Pakistan played a role in facilitating the release of American Americans who were held captive in Afghanistan. To effectively tackle organised crime, it is essential to have a thorough comprehension of its extent and distinguishing features (Chouvy, 2010). In addition, the formation of a centralized structure and the implementation of a comprehensive national strategy are both advised as ways to make the adoption of this approach more straight forward. It emphasizes the significance of campaigning for peace and supporting democratic systems as a strategy for lowering the likelihood of engaging in activity that is violative of the law. Human trafficking in Pakistan is primarily committed through forced labour, sexual exploitation, and forced begging. One of Pakistan's biggest problems is human trafficking. Many different sectors are impacted by this trend, such as textiles, fishing, buildings, and agriculture. Frequently the victims are internally displaced people, refugees, migrants, and members of marginalized minority groups. More and more people are looking for smugglers to help them get to Western nations, which is why the human smuggling business is flourishing. Corruption among government officials facilitates the market. Human smuggling is widespread in the region of Balochistan and contributes significantly to its economy. The trafficking of weapons is another important problem in Pakistan, with over 75% of privately owned firearms not being registered anywhere in the nation. The proliferation of these weapons has led to an increase in violence by radicals and organised criminal gangs. The arms trafficking business continues to pose a danger to national stability even with initiatives to lower domestic violence and organised crime (Schwab, 2018).

Pakistan has especially serious environmental and crime concerns in Balochistan and the Swat Valley. The illegal gem and precious stone trade has grown as a result of corruption and security concerns; criminal groups are major participants in this sector. Even though the Pakistani government has moved to draw in legitimate mining firms, organised criminals still hold a considerable amount of influence over these operations. Furthermore, popular locations for illegal logging activities include the Pakistani provinces of Gilgit Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In order to avoid paying taxes on the initial haul, it is common practice for people to carry wood illegally from Pakistan to another nation and back again. Within the past five years, poaching is thought to have reduced the pangolin population by 80%, endangering biodiversity. One of the highest global test cannabis seizures occurs in this country, while heroin and heroin trafficking are common. Many Mafia-like criminal networks and organisations are involved in these operations; they are working with rebel groups like the Taliban.

In Pakistan, organised crimes include human smuggling, illegal logging, mining, and heroin trafficking. Members of groups akin to the Mafia greatly influence the judiciary and the democratic process. Racketeering, extortion, and kidnapping are other crimes they commit, all of which are crucial to the process of undermining the official governance structure. Two instances of the domestic and international policy objectives that state embedded actors seek through their cooperation with criminal networks and groups akin to the mafia are the Balochistan insurgency and the war against India. For Pakistan, a weak and corrupt state, organised crime has been a challenging problem. A considerable chunk of the Pakistani government's modest efforts to tackle organised crime are mostly cosmetic and driven more by political objectives than by serious measures. Because of the military's hold, the nation's security and

judiciary systems are rife with corruption and severely lack political independence. Widespread impunity that results from the lack of efficient anti-corruption measures threatens democracy and the rule of law. Violent crime is also fuelled by opposition to the government, particularly in Balochistan and Kashmir. The general distrust of the public in legal and police enforcement institutions of Pakistan is one element causing the country's incredibly poor rule of law. Another challenge is widespread corruption and impunity. Overcrowding, a shortage of staff, and inadequate medical care are all concerns within the system, in addition to the considerable influence of mafia-like organisations over the jail system. Organised crime is combated by specialized police and investigative agencies. Together with money laundering, this covers drug and human trafficking.

Pakistan has one of the biggest risks in the world for money laundering and funding terrorist groups, hence it is being scrutinized for the hazards that go along with these threats. Though development has been gradual and steady, the country is still being investigated for potential threats of money laundering and supporting terrorist groups. Victims of human trafficking in Pakistan deal with a highly constrained civil society and social protection system, in addition to insufficient and ineffective help from law enforcement. Prosecutions of transnational organised crime are more difficult because, despite the existence of laws protecting witnesses, enforcement is still inadequate and witnesses routinely vanish. The Pakistani government's intensified attempts to fight terrorism have led to an increase in the ratio of transnational crime prevention.

4. National Security of Pakistan

Pakistan's national security is significantly threatened by the development of transnational organised crime networks. These criminal organisations engage in a broad variety of illicit operations, such as the trafficking of drugs, weapons, cyberspace, and human beings. The corruption, mismanagement and economic crises are heightened by these factors. The interaction, between globalization and nationalism has significantly impacted border activities on both transnational and global scales leading to direct consequences for South Asia and Pakistan. The United States acknowledges the significance of this issue emphasizing the necessity for a national security strategy that recognizes the aspect of transnational crime networks. To address the web of criminal organizations countries should prioritize network operations as a key tactic to address the increasing threat. The management of crime networks' operations and power within Pakistan's borders presents an immense challenge for the nation's border security. After attaining independence, Pakistan was confronted with national security challenges on its economy, infrastructure, and capacity to fortify itself against belligerent neighbouring countries. Moreover, the nation encountered human security dilemmas stemming from the process of migration and the formation of refugee camps. Pakistan has developed into a military power with contemporary capabilities and a strong reputation on a regional and global scale as a result of the experience it has acquired since 1947. Amidst the current epoch of globalization and complex interdependencies, Pakistan presents states with advantageous prospects to establish trade routes that yield advantages for all participants. Pakistan is dealing with issues that require resolutions despite the government's success, in combating extremism and terrorism within its borders to a similar extent (Gallagher, 2010).

Another major activity of transnational crime networks is drug trafficking, which is a significant security issue in Pakistan. Baluchistan and other regions in Pakistan have been particularly affected by the trade of cannabis, cocaine, and opium poppy heroin, with the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) producing many metric tons of opium. The issue has been exacerbated by political instability, financial crises, regional instability, weak central control, and impact on the national security of Pakistan. Conflicting tribal or ethnic groups use drug production and trafficking to obtain money and weapons, with regional instability, especially around borders, fostering the problem. Pakistan's drug trafficking is largely caused by inefficient central governance, particularly in tribal areas. The Sardar and Malik systems prioritize decentralization, which increases corruption and drug cultivation and trafficking. Despite extensive legislation, Pakistan failed to arrest or prosecute a major drug trafficker in past. Regional events such as the Khomeini regime in Iran, Soviet forces in Afghanistan, and the Afghan War have increased drug cultivation and trafficking in Pakistan. Drug trafficking is concentrated in NWFP cities like Landikotal, Jamrud, Bara Bazaar, and Dara Adam Khel. The powerful Afridis and the Notezai and Bugti tribes of Baluchistan also traffic drugs (Zimmerman & Kiss, 2017). Security stability in Pakistan is threatened by the relationship between narcotics and politics, making drug trafficking prevention difficult. Illicit funds corrupt law enforcement, prosecutors, and political organizations, preventing control. Drug trafficking increases violence, costing the government lives and property. Pakistan's economy and security are threatened by the drug trade, which can generate inflation, need social interventions to address drug addiction, and divert resources from anti-narcotics efforts. Drug revenue exceeds the government's budget and accounts for 25% of GDP, making the state's economic stability dependent on drug money (International Labour Organization, 2017).

5. National Security Policy of Pakistan

The National Security Policy 2022–2026 is Pakistan's most important table security policy statement. It aims to include Pakistan in the development of global patterns by setting policy objectives and priority areas where Pakistan should contribute its national resources to produce the best results. The goal of this approach is to reach the above benchmarks. The objective is to produce the best results that are both realistic and helpful. To safeguard the security and well-being of our families, the Policy gives Pakistan a resident-driven "Comprehensive National Security" structure. The institution assesses threats to our national security from both traditional and modern security viewpoints. Through the application of a geo-economic vision and a heightened focus on geomethodology, economic security is given priority over comprehensive national security. The size of our national asset pie is expected to increase as a result of comprehensive and manageable economic growth, according to the plan. The main objective of the plan is to make the country safer, and these two actors help to make that happen. Because of this, more resources will be available for both traditional security and human security. This is what will happen in the end. If one recognizes the positive connection between economic, traditional, and human security, it is possible to understand the activities of the Human Comprehensive Security Policy that will help Pakistan improve the results of national security over the next few decades. This is possible because of the correlation, which makes it possible to give such an answer (Mikhail, 2024).

The Policy acknowledges the implications and impact of the growing pattern of scene requests for Pakistan. It is also emphasized that these trends are growing. The proliferation of economic and military power hubs and the move towards a multipolar world are two of the most important trends in the current global landscape. When you think about the ongoing global struggle for power, Pakistan's position at key intersections and regional flashpoints offers appealing opportunities. The report's policy recommendations for Pakistani policymakers emphasize how important it is for the government to take a proactive and forward-thinking approach when formulating policy. It understands that taking a rigid or hasty approach in a rapidly changing global environment can have negative consequences and have an impact not only on Pakistan's relations with other countries but also on the country's internal security and societal stability. The impact on Pakistan could be negative.

The goal of making this public version of the National Security Policy was to make it clearer what the main goals and objectives are for the country's direct security. This version's main objective was to provide exact comprehension. Significant opportunities, challenges, and policy objectives are briefly discussed for every crucial component of national security. This study does not include a detailed analysis of the national security environment, the country's key security interests, its approach to execution, or its top priorities. All of these topics are outside the scope of this study. Eight separate parts make up this body. After talking about how policies are made in the first part of the series, the second part takes apart and looks at the parts of Pakistan's national security system. In the six parts that follow, we will talk about different aspects of Pakistan's national security. Each part of the report has Pakistan's goals and objectives for a certain area, as well as an analysis of how that sector is doing right now. The third part, "National Attachment," goes into great detail about the preservation of cultural and religious traditions, the affirmation of unity and power, and the revealing of a government that is open to the needs of its population. In the fourth part, "Obtaining Our Economic Future," economic security is the main topic. The achievement of this objective can be facilitated, among other methods, by a comprehensive analysis of the economy, energy, training, human resources, and technological developments. The detailed rules for networks that will preserve the security of space and networks, as well as deterrence and respect for regional boundaries, are found in section V, which we refer to as "Guard and Regional Trustworthiness." An analysis of the problems that come with "Inward Security" is given in section VI. A few of these difficulties include sectarianism, organised crime, and violent sub-national doctrine. In section VII of the book "International Strategy in an Impacting World," we discuss Pakistan's key bilateral and international relationships, global realignments, and our general national approach to discretion. The last part of the piece, called "Human Security," talks about a lot of different issues, such as migration, population, health and safety, water and environmental protection, and food security. All of these topics are talked about in great detail. Through in-depth interviews and ongoing, comprehensive analysis, the National Security Division of the State Department spent seven years overseeing the creation of the National Security Policy. But the Policy Record will keep changing so that it can include new threats to Pakistan's security, put laws in place to protect against those threats and take advantage of these new chances to make our country much safer and wealthier. A scholarly discussion on the idea of comprehensive national security, which is at the heart of Pakistan's future security vision, is one way that this public archive will add to the Policy's growth. So that political disagreements and changes in national security issues do not affect the discussion of national security, it will help the National Security Policy's call for a focused security policy. The objective of this effort is to raise awareness about a discussion that is focused on security.

6. Impact of Transnational Criminal Organizations on Politics and Governance

A web-like society's structure is held together by a network that is anchored around strongmen. In the context of the North-Western region of Pakistan, there are numerous components of social control resulting in a fragmented society. Further, the leaders of the criminal gangs and militant groups act as strongmen and have influential positions within the social organisations in this society of the North-Western region. These leaders provide the masses with survival strategies different from the Pakistani state. By creating a criminal economy, these strongmen have secured their place in this society (Arsovska, 2014).

Thus, the economy of North-Western Pakistan influences and comprises various legal and illegal, informal and criminal domains, which are controlled by the criminal elites, called powerful men by Migdal. These powerful men have social control because they are mostly, linked with informal links in civil society and also with local officials of the government, as well as mostly have an edge in recruiting the local unemployed youth who are supplied and assisted by the local criminal groups from the local community. The heightened level of organized criminal activity in the northwest of Pakistan shows the weakening of social control of the state. The failure to provide services and security delegitimizes Pakistan's authority as a state. The organized elements in Pakistan have links with the militant outfits and both present an alternative informal rule of the game to the local society. Such rules challenge the writ of the state and help in the alienation of the people from the state. The criminal networks produce an economy that ensures their survival and sabotages the formal economy. The political milieu of the affected areas is distorted to such an extent that the very existence of Pakistan as a state is threatened by transnational crime networks (Mujtaba, 2023).

The increasing security danger is due to our limited understanding of the relationship between state failure and basic factors such as organised crime. This is a result of the widespread lack of knowledge among the general population regarding the intricacies of this occurrence. The examination of war financing and economic incentives that contribute to the continuation of instability is usually prioritized in theories of conflict and state failure. However, they often overlook the political aspects of organised crime. Transnational organised crime significantly exacerbates the failure of nations by exploiting and amplifying other contributing causes. Fragile states, as a result, deteriorate and face increased difficulties in restoring a functioning state. Furthermore, it causes the deterioration of weak conditions. Based on this, policymakers should tackle the issue by considering both political and economic factors. They need to confront the greedy behaviour of transnational organised crime networks while avoiding any actions that might worsen the valid complaints and worries of the individuals it takes advantage of. The issue of state failure due to transnational crime networks is particularly worrisome in countries like Pakistan, where organised crime plays a substantial role in perpetuating conflict. Due to its widespread presence in numerous nations, the drug trade plays a substantial role in funding wars and eroding the legitimacy of governments, making it of utmost importance. Pakistan is plagued by extensive violence, limited territorial control over Afghanistan and Iran, inadequate provision of public goods, and pervasive corruption and illegitimacy in the drug trade. The Afghan

drug trade has all of the aforementioned traits. Even after the Taliban came into power in the 1990s, warlords who relied on the drug trade continued to hold considerable political and economic power. The organisation employed an established drug-based economy to fund its growth and secure the allegiance of regional warlords. The opium trade played a vital role in the Taliban's capacity to establish a facade of power within the country and in its eventual confrontation with the Northern Alliance. Although the Northern Alliance has aligned itself with the transitional government and the Taliban has retreated, drug trafficking remains rampant in Afghanistan, with several factions in the region using it for financial profit. To fully grasp the importance of the collapse of regulated commerce in a country's security and the government's responsibility in addressing these problems, one must have a thorough comprehension of the influence that the drug trade has on state failures.

The drug trade has had a substantial influence on the failure of both Afghanistan and Pakistan, leading to serious political and economic difficulties in each nation. Due to the breakdown of the state and the succeeding instability in Afghanistan, the opium trade thrived. Moreover, it independently gained momentum and provided financial backing to political groups like the Northern Alliance and the Taliban to further their military goals. Both the Taliban and the Northern Alliance acknowledged and received this aid. By engaging in the illegal drug business, transnational crime networks have maintained their independence from government authority. For instance, Afghanistan has not only played a significant role in destabilizing the entire area, but it has also consistently posed the most significant military danger to the state. The proceeds derived from drug trafficking have predominantly funded its activities. The establishment of a terrorist group poses a serious threat to the stability and security of Pakistan and its surrounding areas, causing anger and uneasiness. This group possesses the ability to operate with a significant level of hostility, similar to the patterns often seen in nations that have undergone failure. To safeguard the state from drug-related criminal activities, it is imperative to combat transnational organised crimes, specifically drug trafficking, weapon trafficking, and goods smuggling. For this reason, establishing territorial authority is frequently required. As seen by Afghanistan's persistent post-conflict circumstances, the state's waning influence can be partially attributed to the persistence of ineffective official control in some regions. The existence of transnational crime networks, which directly contribute to the poverty and instability of the nation, makes it more difficult for the government to provide basic public services like security and economic possibilities. It is required to apply other strategies in order to effectively address the threats connected with the majority of illicit networks, such as using corruption to influence local governments.

7. Impact of Transnational Criminal Organizations on Economy

Transnational crime networks usually indulge in money laundering activities for financial benefits. Money laundering refers to the secret transfer of funds between different locations without notifying the relevant government bodies responsible for governance and administration. The objectives of this activity involve tax evasion, concealing illicit profits, and converting ill-gotten monies into assets that comply with legal regulations. Money laundering involves three distinct stages: first, the placement of funds in a foreign bank; second, the execution of cash transactions; and finally, the conversion of cash withdrawals into authorized table investments. The failure of financial institutions, namely banks, to identify laundered currency is a major contributing cause to the occurrence of money laundering. Money laundering can be conducted through several methods, such as round tripping, cash structuring, bank controls, supporting non-governmental organisations, and illicit money transfers facilitated by foreign exchange agencies. Especially in the private sector and in developing nations, these methods have a detrimental effect on the economy in the long run. Money laundering exacerbates the proliferation of more grave offences such as smuggling, drug trafficking, arms trafficking, and aiding terrorist organisations, hence exerting a detrimental influence on society. Enacting legislation and enforcing protocols that explicitly forbid the act of money laundering can be advantageous in combating the practice of illicitly transferring funds across international borders. Money laundering can be effectively prevented at both the regional and global levels (Dawes, 2020).

Money laundering can occur in many financial and business activities, such as wire transfers, credit card payments, currency transactions, digital money transfers, and offshore property development. Money launderers often utilize three interconnected methods: placement, layering, and integration. Money laundering is enabled by various circumstances, such as tax evasion, lenient financial rules, extortion, and corruption. To combat money laundering and other illicit activities, it is imperative to eradicate corruption. Because banks' reserves are unable to detect and report money laundering, money launderers transfer large amounts of cash without thoroughly investigating where it came from. Money laundering consists of three stages: placement, integration, and stratification. Smugglers and money launderers utilize a range of strategies, including smuggling, deceiving airport or border security, engaging in trade-based money laundering, and financing non-governmental groups, in order to commit illegal activities without being apprehended by law enforcement. Pakistan's approach to handling money laundering and tax fraud has drawn criticism. The Interior Ministry has taken action to close down nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) that both support terrorism and engage in actions that harm the state (Islam et al., 2019).

Round tripping is a method employed to engage in money laundering and tax avoidance. It entails firms selling assets to one other, converting them into cash, and then repurchasing them at the original price. This procedure facilitates the retrieval of currency. Money launderers also utilize bank control as a strategy to acquire ownership of a bank and engage in illegal money laundering activities. Cash-oriented firms handle substantial sums of money and engage in a range of activities, including some that are linked to illegal behaviour. Some criminals acquire assets using illegally obtained money, which they subsequently sell as if it were legal tender—most often after having gone through a process of money laundering. Money laundering has a substantial impact on the private sector, vulnerable developing markets, and the economy, leading to serious socioeconomic and societal consequences. Economic repercussions encompass several consequences such as decreased government influence over economic policy, heightened danger of bank failure, and detrimental effects on global economies and currencies. Financial regulatory agencies mostly focus on established markets, resulting in a more significant impact on money laundering in emerging nations. Money laundering has the power to seriously impair the financial institutions and economy of a nation, possibly even resulting in the failure of banks and other financial institutions. Economic indices like inflation, interest rates, and currency value may also be impacted by it. The

government's tax revenue is directly influenced by significant financial transactions, harm to law-abiding citizens, and enhanced tax collection. As a result of the confidential nature of each method, it is difficult to ascertain the worldwide extent of money laundering (Jahan, 2023).

Increasing economic growth is crucial to eradicating poverty and generating employment. The economic consequences of transnational crimes are severe and deleterious. The consequences of illicit activities across borders are unavoidable, and such situations are intolerable in any civilized society. Significant problems in Pakistan include drug trafficking, organised crime, forced migration, and kidnappings. Due to its damage to social infrastructure, deterrent effect on economic activity, and increased production costs, transnational crime impedes economic growth. Investors' mistrust of the government has decreased economic opportunities as a result of Pakistan's rising transnational crime rate. The economic ramifications of illegal actions are far-reaching and complex. Aside from the expenses associated with punishment and law enforcement repercussions, criminal activity can also yield positive psychological and physiological outcomes. While studies have established a connection between homicide rates and GDP growth rates, the occurrence of crime impacts both economic governance and the development of social capital. Such crimes not only lead to unpredictability, fear, and instability, but they also have adverse effects on physical capital, such as roads and school attendance. Criminal activity hampers public investment by redirecting monies that were meant to improve law enforcement, order, and security. In order to reduce the economic impact, it is crucial to have lower crime rates and well-developed justice systems (Adishi et al., 2018). Per capita income fluctuations provide the most basic explanations for money laundering, while economic and deterrent factors offer vital insights into the overall patterns and progress of crime. Criminal conduct can hinder economic growth in three distinct ways: discouraging investment, reducing competitiveness, and reallocating resources. Transnational illicit activity and procreation are positively correlated because engaging in illegal activities incurs significant economic costs and there is a high likelihood of avoiding imprisonment (Asfa Cheema, 2014).

8. Social Impact of Transnational Criminal Organizations

The socioeconomic impact of transnational crime networks, which engage in crimes such as money laundering, intellectual property theft, weapon trafficking, and human trafficking, is massive in Pakistan. Studies conducted in Pakistan and other nations have revealed the relationships between social indicators and transnational crimes such as terrorism, human trafficking and money laundering. Both transnational crime networks and social situations mutually impact each other. The transnational activities of these networks, which take advantage of technical advancements and weaknesses in governance structures to escape punishment, have been exposed by scholars. Studies show the detrimental consequences of these criminal activities on societal stability, economic growth, and transnational sovereignty as a result of transnational crime. Because these networks utilize technological breakthroughs more effectively than the government, they consistently erode national authority. According to earlier research, transnational criminal organisations frequently use current communication and encryption technology to organize their operations and evade discovery by law enforcement. The challenges that governments have while attempting to keep up with the rapidly advancing technology that enables criminals to dodge traditional law enforcement approaches. It is also crucial to adopt intergovernmental coordination and methods for exchanging information in order to successfully combat transnational crime and reduce its impact on social indicators such as national security, democracy, and economic growth, education and sovereignty (Zakaria et al., 2019).

The Global Organised Crime Index illuminate that transnational crime networks impact the following social indicators in Pakistan. Human trafficking, involving forced labour and sexual exploitation, is a significant issue in Pakistan, affecting individuals of all ages and genders. It is primarily carried out by minors and small-scale industries. Pakistan is also a major transit country for Afghan citizens, with a surge in demand causing increased costs of human smuggling. Extortion and protection racketeering are prevalent, with militias affiliated with the Taliban and organized crime groups perpetrating these crimes. These activities are influencing individuals of Pakistan (Makarenko, 2015).

Pakistan has been identified as a beneficiary of US firearms and military equipment, but the country still has millions of unregistered firearms. Counterfeit products, particularly tobacco, are also a concern, with the country's government and corporations vulnerable to security intrusions. The country is also grappling with an illicit forestry problem, with the "timber mafia" responsible for exploitation. Poaching and wildlife trafficking in Pakistan have severe consequences, affecting exotic and endangered species, minerals, and the country's economy. The trade of falcons, Shahtoosh scarves, and pangolins is largely unregulated due to inadequate infrastructure and resources. Corruption and security issues have hampered the development of extractive industries, leading to the black market. Pakistan is also a significant centre for drug trafficking due to its proximity to Afghanistan. All the activities of organised and transnational crimes are impacting Pakistan's economy. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the issue, with opium seizures increasing significantly. Pakistan is also a key player in the global cannabis industry, with a significant population of cannabis consumers.

Cybercrime has increased due to remote access to business networks and digital banking. Financial malfeasance is widespread in the banking sector, negatively impacting industries like sugar and petroleum. Pakistan's political parties and officials are reportedly forming connections with criminal organisations to influence the political landscape, particularly regionally. State corruption is linked to clandestine markets, and allegations of military involvement in unlawful activities like drug trafficking have surfaced. Crime syndicates operate across various sectors, including illicit logging, wildlife offences, and human trafficking. They also engage in illicit transportation of persons to Balochistan. Notable criminal organisations in Pakistan include heroin trafficking, exploitation of non-renewable resources, flora trade, organized crime, and extortion. The country's government has expressed a willingness to combat organised crime, but its actions have been inconsistent. The country has facilitated diplomatic ties with China and Turkey, but its persistent hostility towards India hinders global cooperation in the fight against violent extremism and organised crime. Pakistan faces significant challenges in criminal proceedings, including corruption, inefficiency, and a lack of specialized tribunals for organized crime cases. The prison system is also criticized for its inadequate medical infrastructure, personnel shortages, and overcrowding. The police force is also highly corrupt, with political involvement and restricted operational autonomy posing significant obstacles. The western borderlands present unique challenges for law enforcement, with Balochistan being the primary

site of a low-intensity armed rebellion. The country's financial and economic environment is at high risk due to inadequacies in counter-money laundering and counterterrorism financing (Yousaf, 2018). Consequently, over 25% of Pakistan's population lives in poverty, and the country's economy is heavily reliant on imports. The government has made efforts to detect and aid victims of human trafficking, but there is still a lack of adequate support resources and adequate training for labour inspectors. Civil society organizations face restrictions on press freedom, with female journalists being subjected to harassment and cyberbullying.

9. Conclusion

The study of the impact of Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) on the political, economic, and social landscapes of Pakistan reveals a multifaceted and deeply concerning influence. TCOs have notably disrupted the nation's stability and governance, exerting a direct and indirect influence on various aspects of Pakistani society. TCOs have contributed to weakened state authority and governance, with corruption, political instability, and diminished rule of law. Their involvement in drug trafficking, smuggling, and other illicit activities has often led to compromised political structures, where political leaders and law enforcement agencies are manipulated or coerced. This undermines the state's ability to enforce laws, maintain order, and achieve democratic reforms. TCOs have exacerbated the challenges of underdevelopment and income inequality in Pakistan. The illegal industries they control, such as narcotics trafficking and smuggling, divert resources from legitimate economic growth, discouraging investment, increasing insecurity, and undermining legal businesses. Additionally, the massive financial flows generated by TCOs contribute to the informal economy, reducing state revenue and increasing the difficulty of economic planning and development. Socially, the impact of TCOs is most profound in communities vulnerable to exploitation. Crime, addiction, and violence have created cycles of poverty and insecurity, disproportionately affecting marginalized populations. The penetration of illegal economies into everyday life erodes social trust, encouraging individuals to engage in illicit activities as a means of survival. This leads to further marginalization, the breakdown of family and community structures, and an overall sense of lawlessness. TCOs present significant challenges for Pakistan's political, economic, and social stability. Tackling their influence requires a comprehensive approach that strengthens governance, improves economic resilience, and invests in the social fabric of the nation. International cooperation, improved law enforcement, and robust policy measures are key to mitigating the adverse effects and ensuring long-term stability and development. Without addressing the root causes of TCOs' power, Pakistan's growth prospects remain at risk.

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