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Kenya: Multiagency Strategies for Conflict Management in Laikipia County

Cosmas Ekwom KAMAIS

Emily Adhiambo OKUTO

Abstract: The paper examined multiagency strategies for conflict management in Laikipia County, Kenya. It provided a solid foundation for understanding the context of the effect of multiagency approaches on conflict management. A descriptive survey research design was used incorporating both quantitative and qualitative primary data from a questionnaire, FGDs, and Key Informants interviews. The area of study was Laikipia County, Kenya with a focus on Laikipia West Sub County. Stratified random sampling was used to select respondents while the purposive sampling technique was used to select informants with in-depth knowledge and experience relevant to the research objectives. Qualitative data was coded, thematically categorized, and synthesized. Statistical modeling and trend analysis for quantitative data were performed with the aid of SPSS V.29. The result was presented using graphs, and charts while prioritizing validity and

reliability through rigorous document selection and analysis methods. The research addressed the effectiveness of past strategies, emphasizing the importance of nuanced assessments that considered scope, context, implementation, outcomes, and dissemination. The findings emphasized the need for a nuanced and comprehensive assessment approach, covering scope and context, implementation and outcomes, challenges, and opportunities. The paper advocated for participatory approaches, long-term impact assessment, flexible frameworks, formal dialogue platforms, capacity building, strong leadership, resource mobilization, and continuous learning and adaptation to ensure effective conflict management. It concluded that while multiagency approaches can effectively manage conflicts, successful implementation requires meticulous planning and execution, tailored to the specific dynamics of the conflict landscape. The paper

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recommended a continued focus on participatory approaches, establishing formal dialogue platforms, and prioritizing strong leadership and inclusivity, benefiting policymakers, multiagency leaders, practitioners, and stakeholders involved in conflict management in Laikipia County.

Keywords: Multiagency actions, participatory approach, multiagency strategies, conflict management.

Introduction

A comprehensive and collaborative approach including diverse stakeholders is necessary for conflict management in any region as opined by Almeida, Costa, and Da Silva (2018). The goal of this approach is to have various groups, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community leaders, and others, work together to achieve lasting stability and progress. The multi-agency method of conflict management has been used in a variety of contexts, from the international to the regional to the local level.

Multi-agency efforts, as shown in Australia's fight for Indigenous land rights and reconciliation, have proven to be highly effective (McKemey *et al.*, 2020). Government agencies, aboriginal groups, and philanthropic organizations worked together to construct land management frameworks and launch cultural preservation efforts; these developments are a direct result of the recognition of native title rights. This strategy promotes social cohesiveness and lessens tensions stemming from land disputes, while also redressing historical wrongs and giving Indigenous groups a voice in the decision-making process.

From the perspective of De Sa (2019), the Niger Delta conflict highlights the importance of a collaborative approach in addressing resource-based conflicts, drawing parallels with South Africa's own history of managing post-apartheid challenges. The involvement of governmental agencies, industry players, community representatives, and international bodies in Nigeria's initiatives echoes the inclusive nation-building strategies employed in South Africa (De Sa, 2019). The emphasis on sustainable development and equitable resource distribution aligns with South Africa's ongoing efforts to address historical economic disparities and environmental concerns, particularly in regions affected by mining activities. This perspective underscores the shared imperative across African nations to learn from each other's experiences in fostering cooperation among diverse stakeholders for the collective benefit of society and the environment.

Multi-agency approaches to conflict management in Laikipia County, Kenya, can learn a lot from these studies. A comprehensive plan to resolve land conflicts, resource allocation problems, and ethnic tensions can be developed with the help of local government, community leaders, NGOs, and other interested parties. Methods such as shared

infrastructure building, cross-cultural exchange, and shared classroom instruction are all within the scope of this strategy. When it comes to conflict management and promoting sustainable development in Laikipia County, the many experiences shown by the cited case studies highlight the necessity of openness, cooperation, and continued participation.

Literature Review

Navigating conflicts in international relations, public policy, and organizational settings demands nuanced multiagency approaches. Hickmann and Elsässer (2020) advocate for collaboration among diverse stakeholders, prompting a review of multiagency techniques in conflict management. This literature exploration not only highlights essential case studies but also pinpoints critical gaps, emphasizing the need for further research to enhance the application of multiagency approaches globally.

In the case of the United States America (USA), Hickmann and Elsässer's (2020) emphasis on the imperative collaboration among governments, international organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and the private sector is particularly relevant. Within the USA, addressing complex challenges, ranging from national security issues to humanitarian crises necessitates the concerted efforts of these diverse entities. The review's identification of broad gaps in existing multiagency techniques aligns with instances where collaboration may fall short, such as in response to natural disasters or security threats. The call for a focused examination of specific challenges resonated within the U.S., urging policymakers and practitioners to refine their multiagency approaches to enhance coordination, communication, and resource allocation across different contexts within the country.

Exploring the United Kingdom's (UK) approach to counterterrorism, Schneeberger's (2020) insights resonate with the complexities faced by British intelligence, law enforcement, military, and financial institutions. The collaboration among these agencies is evident, yet persistent gaps in information exchange, and legal frameworks, and the delicate balance between security imperatives and civil liberties pose ongoing challenges. In the context of the UK's counterterrorism efforts, regional dynamics and nuanced geopolitical considerations further underscore the need for targeted research Berdal and Sherman (2023). Addressing these gaps is crucial to refining the country's multiagency tactics, ensuring a more effective and balanced approach to safeguarding national security while upholding individual rights and freedoms.

The corporate landscape in Japan in light of Lezak *et al.* (2019) insights on multiagency solutions in the private sector reveals noteworthy dynamics. Japan, with its unique business culture, grapples with challenges despite making progress in addressing conflicts, ethical issues, and corporate social responsibility. Lezak *et al.* (2019) call for standardized frameworks and tailored recommendations to align with Japan's need to navigate

regional dynamics and cultural nuances in the business environment. As Japanese corporations strive for greater transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct, targeted research becomes essential in developing strategies that not only resonate with the global push for responsible business practices but also align with the distinctive values and expectations within Japan's corporate landscape.

In the case of Syria, Ryan's (2022) research gives significance as humanitarian catastrophes unfold with complex dynamics. The conflict has engaged national, international, and NGO entities in efforts to provide aid and alleviate suffering. However, challenges persist due to unreliable funding, conflicting objectives among stakeholders, and difficulties in the distribution of aid within the war-torn country. Given the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Syria, research focusing on optimal financing methods and transparent coordination rules was crucial. Such insights not only address the national intricacies of aid delivery but also contribute to global efforts in refining multiagency solutions to respond more effectively to similar humanitarian catastrophes worldwide.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) through the context of United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations, the challenges highlighted by the review become salient (Smith & Johnson, 2022). Despite the substantial involvement of military troops, humanitarian organizations, and diplomats in addressing the complex conflict dynamics in the DRC, deficiencies in coordination, communication, and resource allocation have impeded the effectiveness of peacekeeping efforts. The need for further research became crucial in this context, particularly in the DRC where operational challenges such as navigating diverse armed groups, ensuring civilian protection, and managing complex geopolitical dynamics persist. Improving interagency cooperation and mission efficiency is paramount to fostering stability in the region and addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by UN peacekeeping operations globally.

In Kenya, the necessity for multiagency conflict management is underscored by the country's historical and contemporary challenges, making Hickmann and Elsässer's (2020) insights particularly pertinent. Kenya has faced internal conflicts, such as political violence and ethnic tensions, demanding collaboration among governmental bodies, international organizations, NGOs, and the private sector. Despite efforts to address conflicts, shortcomings in coordination, communication, and resource allocation persist. This aligns with the broader call for additional research to enhance the knowledge and application of multiagency approaches in the Kenyan context. Further examination and improvement of interagency cooperation are crucial for effectively navigating the intricate challenges of conflict management within the country (Hickmann & Elsässer, 2020).

Challenges in multiagency conflict management were alluded to, progressing from broad imperatives to specific instances. Each case highlights gaps and complexities, emphasizing the need for targeted research to enhance the effectiveness and ethical application of multiagency approaches across diverse contexts worldwide.

Methodology

The study utilized a descriptive survey research design. The study incorporated both quantitative and qualitative primary data from a questionnaire, FGDs, and key informants' interviews. The area of study was Laikipia County, Kenya with a focus on Laikipia West Sub County. Stratified random sampling was used to select respondents while the purposive sampling technique was used to select informants with in-depth knowledge and experience relevant to the research objectives. Qualitative data was coded, thematically categorized, and synthesized. Statistical modeling and trend analysis for quantitative data were performed with the aid of SPSS V.29. The result was presented using graphs, charts, tables, prioritized validity, and reliability through rigorous document selection and analysis methods. Ethical considerations included source attribution, respect for intellectual property rights, and privacy protection, along with obtaining necessary permits and approvals for the study.

Findings

The study's assessment of multiagency strategies for conflict management in Laikipia County delved into various aspects, including collaboration platforms, resource mobilization plans, and early warning systems. By scrutinizing how these strategies aligned with the specific conflicts prevalent in the region, researchers identified both strengths and areas requiring improvement. This comprehensive evaluation is crucial for ensuring the ongoing effectiveness of these strategies in addressing the ever-evolving conflict landscape, enabling stakeholders to adapt and refine their approaches accordingly. Key findings emphasized the paramount importance of understanding the conflict landscape itself and analyzing types, frequency, and root causes to provide context for evaluating multiagency strategies. Nadio (2018) underscored this when she espoused the need to engage the community in addressing root causes. This contextual understanding facilitated a targeted assessment, allowing stakeholders to tailor interventions to the specific challenges faced in Laikipia County.

The study also focused on the implementation of these strategies and their impact, tracking how they were applied across different conflicts and stakeholders. The researcher looked for patterns and variations in implementation to understand effectiveness in diverse contexts. Additionally, the study measured the impact of the strategies on outcomes such as violence reduction, improved community relations, and increased trust. This multifaceted approach, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data, provided a thorough understanding of the outcomes achieved through multiagency conflict management. Incorporating stakeholder perspectives was integral to the evaluation, with interviews and surveys capturing first-hand experiences to bridge the gap between theory and practice as advised by Koivumäki and Wilkinson (2020). By incorporating

stakeholder feedback, the study identified evidence-based strategies contributing to a deeper understanding of multiagency conflict management's effectiveness.

The study leveraged its findings for advocacy purposes, utilizing evidence gathered to push for policy changes, resource allocation adjustments, and capacity-building initiatives. This advocacy strengthened multiagency conflict management by influencing decision-makers at various levels. By connecting research with real-world action, the study contributed to improving conflict management strategies and fostering lasting peace in Laikipia County. In concurrence with Kimonye (2022), the study highlighted the importance of maintaining a flexible and adaptable framework to address the dynamic nature of conflicts and the evolving needs of stakeholders. This adaptive approach ensured that the research remained responsive to emerging needs and the evolving conflict landscape, facilitating more effective and context-specific recommendations for enhancing multi-agency strategies in the ongoing effort to manage conflicts in Laikipia County.

The study revealed that there were capacity-building and training programs in place, which agreed with the findings by Nadio (2018) in her study on the multiagency approach to communal conflicts in north-rift Kenya. Through the implementation of capacity-building and training programs, stakeholders were equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources to manage conflicts effectively. These programs focus on conflict analysis, negotiation and mediation skills, peacebuilding techniques, and trauma healing, among other topics, and involve collaboration between government agencies, NGOs, and international partners to enhance the capacity of local actors in conflict management. In a qualitative inquiry, a key informant opined that:

As someone deeply involved in Laikipia County's conflict management efforts, I rely on a various measure. As an administrator, I use regular interagency meetings to bring everyone to the table. We also conduct joint patrols with the Kenya Police Service and Kenya Wildlife Service in high-risk areas like Dol Dol. In addition, multiagency task forces tackle specific issues, drawing expertise from government, communities, and civil society. At the grassroots level, we empower communities through peace committees and forums, utilizing traditional conflict resolution methods alongside government support. Capacity-building programs are also important as they equip the community and our multiagency officers with the skills and knowledge needed for effective conflict management. I can tell you that we have a well-trained team working towards a peaceful Laikipia County.

(KII2, 8th January 2024, Laikipia County)

The sentiment expressed the determination and collaboration in addressing conflict management in Laikipia County, emphasizing a multifaceted approach using various strategies as espoused by Bond and Mkutu (2018) as well as Kimonye (2022). The

sentiments highlight the importance of communication and information sharing through interagency meetings, alongside proactive measures like joint patrols to deter conflict. The use of multiagency task forces demonstrates a commitment to involving diverse expertise, while community-based mechanisms empower local ownership of solutions. This notion supports the findings of Kibusia (2020) in his study on multiagency approaches in Boni enclave. The focus on capacity building ensures a well-equipped team working towards a lasting peace.

Furthermore, the study assessed the efficacy of multiagency strategies employed for conflict management in Laikipia County, a region characterized by diverse stakeholder groups and persistent disputes. Laikipia County faced challenges stemming from interactions between pastoralists, farmers, community leaders, government officials, and various agencies, necessitating a nuanced approach to conflict resolution. The study shed light on the impact of past multiagency actions on conflict management from the perspectives of affected communities, government entities, and non-governmental organizations. By employing a comprehensive methodology that included surveys, focus group discussions, interviews, and document analysis, the study unraveled the dynamics at play and offered insights into the effectiveness of collaborative efforts in mitigating conflicts within the County. Figure 1 indicates the level of familiarity with multi-agency strategies for conflict management in Laikipia County, among the respondents in the study.

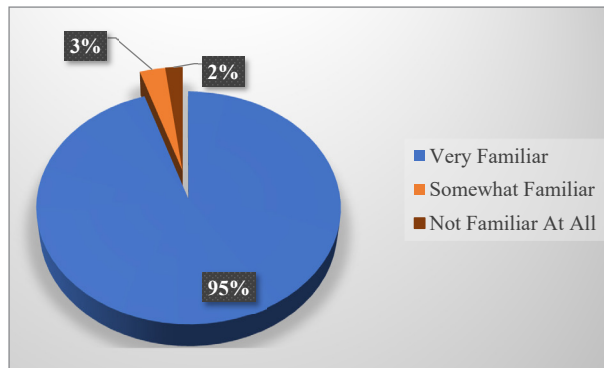


Figure 1. The Level of Familiarity with Multiagency Strategies for Conflict Management in Laikipia County

Source: Field data, 2024.

The survey results indicated a high level of familiarity with multiagency strategies for conflict management in Laikipia County among the respondents. Specifically, 95% of the participants reported being very familiar with these strategies, suggesting a strong awareness and understanding within the surveyed population. The minority,

constituting 3%, claimed to be somewhat familiar, while a mere 2% expressed not being familiar at all. This distribution suggests a generally well-informed respondent base, which may indicate a positive reception or effective dissemination of information regarding the multiagency strategies for conflict management in the specified region. This affirms the findings by Macharia (2021) that community awareness initiatives create positive community protection responses. However, the small percentages of those indicating less familiarity should be considered when interpreting the overall findings, acknowledging potential gaps in awareness that might affect the effectiveness of these strategies across the community. Figure 2, shows the extent of multiagency strategies application for conflict management in Laikipia County.

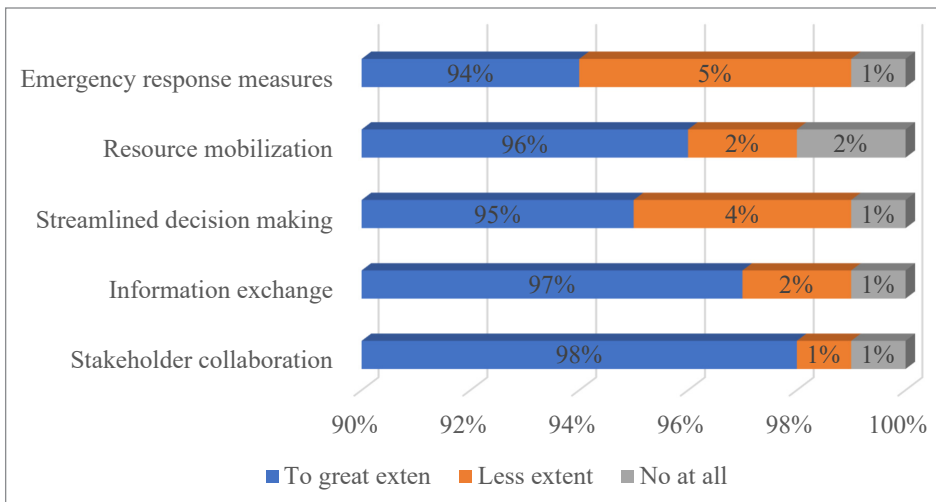


Figure 2. Extent of Multiagency Strategies Application for Conflict Management in Laikipia County

Source: Field data, 2024.

The survey outcomes revealed a widespread application of multiagency strategies for conflict management in Laikipia County. Stakeholder collaboration was reported to a great extent by 98% of respondents, indicating a high level of cooperation among various entities involved in conflict management. Likewise, information exchange was prevalent, with 97% of participants reporting its application to a great extent. Streamlined decision-making processes were employed to a great extent by 95% of respondents, highlighting efficient coordination among agencies. Resource mobilization was also a commonly adopted strategy, with 96% expressing its application to a great extent. Emergency response measures were implemented to a great extent by 94% of participants. These high percentages across strategies suggest a strong commitment to and effective utilization of multiagency approaches for conflict management in the county.

as highlighted by Mutunga (2021). The minimal proportions reporting less extent or no application at all indicate a generally robust implementation of these strategies, underscoring the efficacy of collaborative efforts in conflict management. Figure 3, shows the effectiveness of the existing multiagency strategies for conflict management in the study.

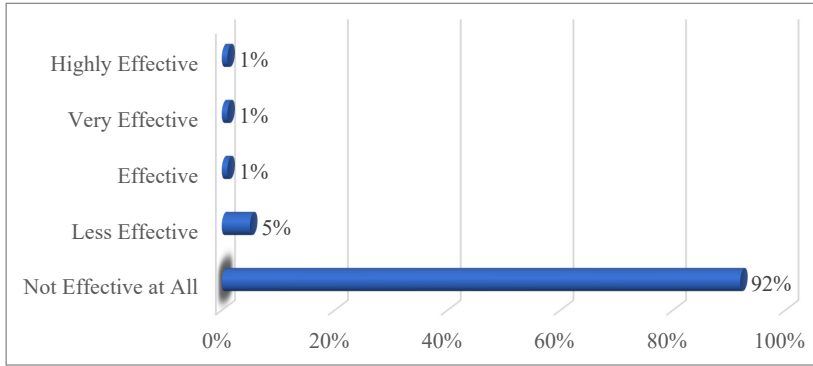


Figure 3. The Effectiveness of the Existing Multiagency Strategies for Conflict Management

Source: Field data, 2024.

The evaluation of the effectiveness of existing multi-agency strategies for conflict management indicated a predominant perception of ineffectiveness among respondents, with 92% expressing that these strategies were not effective at all. Only small proportions reported varying levels of effectiveness, with 5% indicating less effectiveness, and 1% each expressing effectiveness, very effective, and highly effective. This overwhelmingly negative response suggests a significant dissatisfaction or skepticism regarding the impact of the multiagency strategies employed for conflict management. The finding supports the assertion by Kut (2022) that multiagency actions were not attaining the requisite objectives in resolving land conflicts. Besides, the findings conflict with the conclusion by Meteti (2022) that multiagency approaches were effective in Laikipia County. The notable lack of positive assessments implies potential shortcomings or challenges in the implementation of these strategies, highlighting the need for a critical re-evaluation and potential adjustments to enhance their efficacy based on the feedback received from the surveyed population. Figure 4, shows the probe into specific agencies or organizations that play a more significant role in conflict management in the study.

The survey findings indicated a clear consensus among respondents, with 98% acknowledging the presence of specific agencies or organizations that played a more significant role in conflict management. This agrees with the report by Mwangi and Muniu (2023) that there is a representation of the Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Justice, and Ministry of Defence as agencies in Laikipia County.

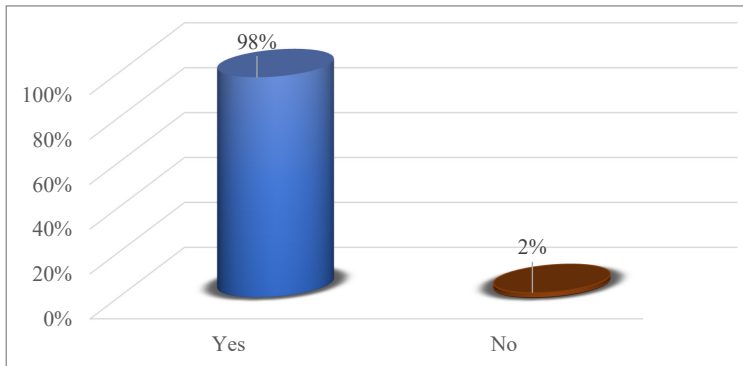


Figure 4. Specific Agencies or Organizations that Play a More Significant Role in Conflict Management

Source: Field data, 2024.

This high percentage underscores a strong perception within the surveyed population that certain entities were actively involved in addressing and managing conflicts. The limited 2% who responded negatively to the existence of such organizations might suggest a minor discrepancy in awareness or recognition among a small segment of participants. Overall, the overwhelming affirmation of the presence of key agencies or organizations highlights the prominence of specific entities in the landscape of conflict management and underscores their perceived significance in addressing conflicts within the community.

Findings from the study revealed that evaluating the effectiveness of multiagency strategies in Laikipia County's complex conflict landscape requires a comprehensive approach that captures the nuanced impacts across various levels. Lusiola (2021), when examining structural and legal frameworks of multiagency operations, advanced the same opinion. Some of the key considerations for effective assessment include the scope and context, implementation and outcomes, challenges and opportunities, data analysis and sharing, and additional considerations.

Understanding the multifaceted nature of conflicts was crucial in providing a contextual backdrop within which multiagency strategies operated in conflict management. By discerning the intricacies of conflicts, the study tailored its examination to the specific challenges faced in Laikipia County, fostering a more informed and targeted approach to the assessment of multiagency strategies. In a FGD, a participant opined that:

According to be I have found that understanding the complex nature of conflicts in Laikipia County is very important. The truth is the government of the county needs to look at the different types of conflicts, how often they occur, and what is causing them in the first place. If we understand this, we can tell how well

multi-agency conflict management strategies are working, or else it will be the same story. A targeted way of looking at things ensures our evaluation is informed by the specific challenges Laikipia County faces.

(FGD Participant 1, 10th January 2024, Laikipia Town Hall)

Maintaining a flexible and adaptable framework was another key consideration. The study acknowledged the position held by Edna (2020) on the dynamic nature of conflicts and the evolving needs of stakeholders in Laikipia County. Therefore, the study advocated for the continuous refinement and adaptation of the assessment framework based on emerging needs, feedback from stakeholders, and the evolving conflict landscape. This adaptive approach was designed to ensure that the research remained responsive to the ever-changing context, facilitating more effective and context-specific recommendations for enhancing multi-agency strategies in the ongoing effort to manage conflicts in Laikipia County. In an interview, a key informant opined:

On Multiagency Strategies for Conflict Management in Laikipia County, I would emphasize the irony of high awareness and application of these strategies alongside their perceived ineffectiveness. While collaboration, information sharing, and resource mobilization seem well established, there is a lack of tangible outcomes in reducing violence or fostering trust suggests critical gaps in implementation or alignment with the complex conflict dynamics.

(KII1, 8th January 2024, Laikipia County)

The voice suggests that addressing these gaps through targeted interventions, improved resource utilization, and adaptation to specific contexts is crucial. Additionally, prioritizing long-term impacts, community participation, and data-driven advocacy can strengthen the effectiveness of multiagency strategies and contribute to sustainable peace as noted by Hickmann and Elsässer (2020).

A study by Allen et al. (2021) emphasizes the importance of participatory approaches in conflict research. Their work highlights that involving affected communities throughout data collection, analysis, and decision-making processes leads to richer data, fosters trust between researchers and communities, and empowers participants to have a say in solutions. This participatory approach ultimately strengthens the research's credibility and relevance to those most impacted by the conflict.

Discussion

The study undertook a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of various multi-agency strategies employed in Laikipia County's conflict management efforts. This evaluation encompassed a review of collaboration platforms, resource mobilization plans, and early warning systems to gauge their alignment with the specific conflicts prevailing in the region. By delving into how well these strategies addressed

the nuanced challenges faced by Laikipia County, researchers identified both strengths and areas requiring improvement. According to Hickmann and Elsässer (2020), critical evaluation is indispensable for ensuring the continued efficacy of these strategies amidst the ever-evolving conflict landscape, enabling stakeholders to adapt and refine their approaches accordingly.

A pivotal revelation from the study was the paramount importance of comprehending the intricacies of the conflict landscape itself. Through the analysis of conflict types, frequency, and root causes, researchers gained contextual insights essential for evaluating the suitability of multiagency strategies. This contextual understanding facilitated a targeted assessment, enabling stakeholders to tailor their interventions to the specific needs and challenges prevalent in Laikipia County. Moreover, the study scrutinized the implementation of these strategies and their impacts, tracking patterns and variations across diverse contexts to ascertain their effectiveness in mitigating conflicts and fostering peace.

Incorporating stakeholder perspectives was integral to the evaluation process, with interviews and surveys capturing the first-hand experiences of those directly engaged in conflict management. This bridged the gap between theory and practice, enriching the evaluation with real-world insights and ensuring that the voices of key actors were heard and considered resonating with a study by Schneeberger (2020). Furthermore, the study utilized its findings for advocacy purposes, leveraging the evidence gathered to advocate for policy changes, resource allocation adjustments, and capacity-building initiatives. By translating research into actionable recommendations, the study catalyzed positive change in conflict management strategies, ultimately contributing to the promotion of lasting peace and stability in Laikipia County.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study concluded that strategies to enhance multiagency action were necessary. This could be done through improved resource allocation and utilization, reducing redundancies, and optimizing responses to conflicts. The early warning and rapid response capabilities of well-functioning multiagency structures demonstrated their efficiency in preventing the escalation of conflicts. Collaboration within these structures promoted shared learning and expertise among participating agencies, contributing to adaptive and responsive conflict management practices.

Therefore, the study recommends the need for continued emphasis on participatory approaches, long-term impact assessment, and flexible frameworks. Actively involving affected communities in decision-making processes ensures that interventions are responsive to their needs and fosters a sense of ownership. Prioritizing long-term impacts beyond immediate changes in conflict dynamics contributes to sustainable peacebuilding and development. Additionally, maintaining a flexible and adaptable framework

allows strategies to evolve in response to emerging needs, enhancing their effectiveness in addressing the evolving conflict landscape, by policymakers and practitioners involved in Multiagency Conflict Management Initiatives.

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Nigeria:

Security Concerns of Internally Displaced Persons Living in Non-Camp Settings in Kwara State

Jean Marie Kasonga MBOMBO

Olufunke Mercy SHITTU

Abstract: Internally displaced persons (IDPs) seek refuge in territories that are considered safer, including outside officially designated camps. This development raises security concerns for host communities, thus increasing the likelihood of conflict. This paper set out to unveil the presence of IDPs in non-camp settings (NCS) in Kwara State, examine the security implications associated with their covert existence within host communities, and evaluate the strategies put in place by the State Government to address them. The study adopted a mixed method approach, in which 200 copies of a questionnaire were distributed to local participants in selected towns, out of which 188 copies were retrieved. A snowball technique was used to identify unregistered IDPs while a purposive sampling technique was useful in the selection of key informants for interviews. The study found that the security implications of hosting IDPs were numerous: feelings of insecurity, a threat to physical and mental health, a threat to life, vulnerability to harassment; increas-

ing demographic imbalance, and condescending attitude of the host population among others. The study concluded that a high level of impoverishment in NCS threatens human security for both the host population and the IDPs. The study recommended that the Kwara State Government should synergize with relevant stakeholders and the local communities, to identify and profile all victims of internal displacement for an effective response to security challenges.

Keywords: Security, Internal Displacement, non-camp setting, host community, Kwara.

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Introduction

In many parts of the world, entire populations have been forcibly displaced as a result of natural disasters such as flooding, hurricanes, drought, and earthquakes, to name but a few. The number of people reported to have been internally displaced and the complexity of internal displacement crises across the world have increased tremendously in the last decade (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2018a). The African continent has fared worse on the issue of internal displacement, as more than half of the world's IDPs can be found in Africa (Crisp *et al.*, 2012; Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, 2019). In recent times, the wave of new displacement across Africa has been increasing so much that by the end of 2019, the global outlook of internal displacement showed that "1,790,000 people were internally displaced in Ethiopia; 5,668,000 people in DRC; 2,600,000 in Somalia; 246, 000 in South Sudan, 2,372,000 in Sudan and 2,743,000 in Nigeria" (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2020, p. 2). The rising trend of internal displacement of persons (IDP) brought about by armed conflicts constitutes one of the greatest human tragedies of our time.

Nigeria has a history of mass displacement that goes back to the civil war of 1967–1970. In recent times, after a return to civilian rule (1999), the most populous black nation witnessed numerous instances of internal displacement stemming from attempts at the application of Sharia law in some northern states of the Federation, recurrent ethno-religious conflicts, and the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast. Being a relatively peaceful State in the North-Central geo-political zone, Kwara, with an estimated population of 3,192.893 as of 2016, seems to be a preferred destination for internally displaced persons given the fact that Ilorin, the State capital, has a predominantly Muslim population, and the city maintains strong cultural ties with northern Nigeria. As a result, many victims of insurgency and other violent situations in the North would move down and find refuge in host communities that share similar values, norms, and worldviews.

Statement of the Problem

According to the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA, 2021), 87 % of the IDPs in the North-West and North-Central regions of Nigeria were displaced within their state of origin. As of January 2021, 309 231 IDPs were registered in the North-Central region but available data on the number of returnees in Kwara state could not be found. However, the influx of IDPs into communities in Kwara State continues unabated given that there seems to be no end in sight to the prevalent climate of insecurity in northern Nigeria. These unregistered newcomers roam the streets without a fixed location until they eventually find shelter within a local community. As the presence of strangers continues to grow numerically, residents become apprehensive of security threats. For instance, in 2015, a shootout between suspected Boko Haram members and security personnel, in a residential area in the Ilorin metropolis, moved the State Security

Council to constitute a security committee that was charged with the responsibility of working out modalities for managing the influx of IDPs into the State (Ilorin.Info, 2015; Akinyemi, 2015). Similarly, the Hausa community in Oko Olowo/Oloje, complained to the Kwara State Police Headquarters, about the presence and persistent arrival of large numbers of IDPs in the area.

This development has raised security issues such as hooliganism and indoctrination, specifically in Oko Olowo where the Hausa Muslim population and other members of the community live together. Again, in June 2019, commercial motorcycle operators who were mainly Hausa-speaking young men (from the North embarked on a protest against extortion, which turned into a mob action that breached public peace and destroyed public property in Ilorin (Ajikobi, 2019; Ogunwale, 2019). Whether on the farm, in the market square, or among street vendors, similar cases of clashes between residents and outsiders abound, which can be attributed to the internal displacement of people stemming from the prevailing climate of insecurity in northeast Nigeria. This phenomenon has attracted the interest of many scholars concerning its causes, impact on food security, education, economic and psycho-social effects, etc. (Aderogba, 2018; Oyelude & Osuigwe, 2017). However, this study has the merits of localizing the presence of unregistered IDPs, now dispersed across different non-camp settings, to underscore some security concerns affecting local communities in Kwara State.

Conceptual Clarification

In this section, the use of some keywords is briefly clarified, such as security, internally displaced persons, non-camp setting, and host community without prejudice to the abundant literature on internal displacement. To begin with, the concept of security has been traditionally tied to the survival of states within the international system which translates into preparedness for war against potential aggression coming from enemy states (military capability). However, since the end of the Cold War, a comprehensive notion of security that includes the well-being of citizens has come to stay, being defined as human security. Consequently, state security at the borders means nothing if citizens' security within the state is at stake. As one scholar contends, "Human security is not a concern with weapons. It is a concern with human dignity. In the last analysis, it is a child who did not die, a disease that did not spread, an ethnic tension that did not explode, a dissident who was not silent, a human spirit that was not crushed" (Haq 1995, cited in Acharya, 2011, p. 481).

The phenomenon of internal displacement of people emerged in the late 1980s, following the change in the pattern of conflicts, from inter-state to intra-state, and the shift of emphasis from state actors to non-state actors as drivers of conflict (Cohen & Deng, 1998; Haynes, 2010). Since then, two types of displacement with attendant responsibilities have been considered. On the one hand, crossing international borders

makes a displaced person a refugee whose protection befalls the United Nations High Commission for Refugees as stipulated in the 1951 Convention (UNHCR 2001).

On the other hand, displacement of people within national borders is the sole responsibility of national governments to see to it that desperate citizens who forcibly move within the country in search of a safer abode receive adequate assistance. To ensure that all displacement-inducing situations are captured, this study adopts the Guiding Principles' definition of the concept of internally displaced persons as

Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of, or to avoid the effects of armed conflicts, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, or natural or man-made disaster; and who have not crossed an internationally recognized border (UNHCR, 1998).

All impoverished IDPs are not willing to live on hand-outs from government and charity organizations in camps. While some throng public places as professional beggars, many others hawk the streets as day laborers and peddlers with no fixed address. The concept of Non-camp settings (NCS) suggests informal locations where undocumented/unregistered IDPs can be found within the state, be it uncompleted buildings, school premises, market places to name but a few. Studies have found that more IDPs are living in non-camp settings than those who live in clearly designated camps. Those among them who choose to live outside camps either settle down with families and acquaintances or can afford to fend for themselves in rented accommodations in host communities (Beyani, 2013; Caron, 2017).

Hosting implies the capacity to offer hospitality to strangers without any strings attached. It is more manifested in a country that opens its national borders to foreigners in need of protection with little or no involvement of local populations even though the latter can, on their initiative, offer to accommodate such strangers. The concept of host community connotes a positive relationship between hosts and guests but it can be misleading because the warm sense of welcome of IDPs cannot be assumed, particularly, when dealing with mass displacement for a long period. The influx of undocumented IDPs in a given community is noticeable with a rapid increase of the population and its attendant conflict over scarce resources such as water, sanitation, housing, and job opportunities, keeping the security of lives and property at the front burner of policy-makers. The next section highlights the possible nexus between internal displacement and security concerns with a special focus on undocumented IDPs.

Literature review

Traditionally, security refers to the protection of the territorial integrity of states from aggressions (Buzan, 1991; Acharya, 2001). However, many studies adjudged the

state-centered perception of security as too narrow (Nye & Lynn-Jones, 1988; Baldwin, 1997; Acharya, 2001; Degaut, 2015). This paradigm shift has changed the focus from the state-centric notion to making citizens the center point of security and led to a series of discussions in the United Nations Organisation. The human security approach was introduced by the 1994 Report of the United Nations Human Development Programme. According to the report, the scope of human security covers seven major areas of human endeavor as follows:

1. Economic Security: assurance of basic income for people, usually from productive and remunerative work or publicly financed safety net;
2. Food Security: ensuring that people have access to food at all times;
3. Health Security: guaranteeing that all people have a minimum level of protection from diseases, intending to prevent avoidable sicknesses and deaths;
4. Environmental Security: protecting people from short-and long-term ravages of nature, man-made threats in nature, and deterioration of the natural environment;
5. Personal Security: protecting people from violence, whether from the State, external States, predatory individuals, etc.;
6. Community Security: protecting people from sectarian and ethnic violence; and from loss of cultural relationships;
7. Political Security: ensuring that people live in a society that respects basic human rights, and also people's freedom from the State's attempt to exercise undue control over ideas and information (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 1994).

Gomez and Gasper (2013) stress that human security analysis is focused on threats. To ensure human security as freedom from fear of the perceived or actual threat of harm, the underlying cause(s) of insecurity should be investigated with a view to proffering solutions to identified threats. In other words, any discussion around the forced displacement of populations must take into account immediate triggers, stages of intervention, or management of IDPs, including the voluntary return of the affected population to their former habitats.

However, undocumented IDPs are difficult to identify as they are found mainly outside government-run camps. According to the study conducted by Beyani (2013), non-camp settings refer to "a variety of settings, where IDPs live outside officially recognized camps" (p. 3). The scholar also notes that IDPs who live outside camps usually live with families or friends. They are also found in rented accommodations. Displaced persons also move into host communities to access necessary assistance to mitigate the negative effects of having to relocate from communities of origin unexpectedly. It is worth noting that host communities are territories, where displaced persons move, to avoid situations of natural or manmade disasters.

Investigating the emerging trend whereby IDPs choose to live with host families as against living in officially designated camps, one scholar concludes that under this type of arrangement, non-camp settings could take the form of “allowing the displaced family to build shelters on the host family’s property; allocating space in the house of the host family for the use of the displaced family; allowing displaced persons to occupy an out-building on the host family’s property; and allowing displaced persons to use another house owned by the host” (Caron, 2017, p. 57). Similarly, Erong (2017) studies IDPs who live with host families in the Sulemanti community, in Maiduguri, Borno State, and observes that some of them live in the houses of host families (sharing the same roof) while others construct makeshift shelters on properties released to them by their hosts.

There is an ongoing argument about security threats associated with the presence of displaced persons in the host community (Fajth *et al.*, 2019). Carillo (2009) contends that IDPs who live outside camps often live in informal settlements, where they build makeshift shelters. The study also notes that such settlements are usually located on the outskirts of cities and towns, in locations visibly lacking social amenities. This position is illustrated by the informal settlement in Suba, on the outskirts of Bogota, Colombia (Arredondo, *et al.*, 2011); the Acholi quarters on the outskirts of Kampala, Uganda (Wyrzykowski, 2010); and Kuseri settlement in Maiduguri, Borno State (Mohammed, 2017). In addition, Controneo (2017), Kirbyshire *et al.* (2017), and Fielden (2008), all agreed that IDPs who desire to live outside camps might also live in rented accommodation, or occupy uncompleted buildings, damaged buildings, and public buildings, with or without the permission of the owners or relevant authorities. They may eventually cohabit in crowded accommodations to avoid the payment of exorbitant rents while facing vulnerability risks, especially for women and young girls.

The exposure of IDPs to violence may increase their likelihood of perpetrating future violence, while the relative social and economic deprivations may increase their propensity to engage in criminal activities (Depetris-Chauvin & Santo, 2018). According to Mohammed (2017), tensions occur in host communities with poor infrastructure as a result of the pressure of the influx of IDPs. Carillo (2009) notes that the inability of IDPs to improve their livelihood over time may push some of them to adopt harmful coping strategies, including criminal acts, to have sufficient income to cover the costs of food, accommodation, etc. In the same vein, poverty, social exclusion, and lack of opportunities may make young IDPs living in non-camp settings to become vulnerable to the influence of urban criminality.

When it comes to insecurity as a result of mismanagement of the IDP crisis, a study on urban displacement in the 21st century notes that the presence of IDPs in host communities often generates suspicion and mistrust, regarding the reason why IDPs moved to such environments in the first place (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2018b). Furthermore, IDPs’ movement to urban areas is also a major contributory factor to the

“proliferation of informal settlements” (Mooney, 2005, p. 15). This was the situation in Kenya, where the steady flow of displaced rural population into Nairobi contributed significantly to the growth of Kibera, one of Kenya’s largest informal settlements (Rhabaran, as cited in Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2018b).

Many studies concur that IDPs living in non-camp settings are more than those registered in official camp settings (Beyani, 2013; Controneo, 2017; Grip, 2017; Kirbyshire *et al.*, 2017; Mohammed, 2017; Carillo, 2009). Caron (2017) observes an emerging trend whereby local families host displaced persons in their homes. This development is gaining wide acceptability: host families allow IDPs to dwell in their homes for personal reasons ranging from cultural norms about hospitality, normative expectations to help those in need, or reciprocation of assistance once received. Similarly, Erong (2017) confirms this position by concluding that IDPs’ preference for host communities is based on the significant role played by the communities in saving lives and building the resilience of displaced persons.

Controneo (2017) contends that the arrival of IDPs in host communities increases the availability of unskilled labor particularly in the informal sector, which may raise the unemployment rate, and possibly cause a drop in wages. This development could eventually change existing demographic balances (Haider, 2014). Although convincing arguments that point to a potentially negative correlation between the influx of a large displaced population and insecurity in host communities abound, a considerable body of work that portrays positive social impact cannot be overlooked. The active presence of displaced persons may improve the local economy, and ipso facto ignite beneficial social opportunities (Caron, 2017). Therefore, the resultant effects of IDPs in non-camp settings are “context-specific, and highly conditional on local policies towards displaced persons as well as cultural (dis)similarities” (Fajth *et al.*, 2019, p. 10).

Concerning the management of IDPs, the Guiding Principles state that national governments are responsible for their protection. As far as Nigeria is concerned, a multidimensional crisis has affected many states in the north-central, northeast, and northwest geopolitical zones. Long-standing conflicts between farmers and herders, indigenes and settlers couched in ethno-religious overtones, banditry in villages, and above all, repeated terrorist attacks since 2008 are among the causes of forced displacement of people that put a lot of strain on the coping strategies of residents of Kwara state in recent time. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) of 18 May 2022, between 2008 and 2021, available data indicate a record of 4.6 million internally displaced persons in Nigeria (IDMC, 2022).

Osagioduwa and Oluwakorede (2016) opine that the Federal Government of Nigeria attempted to alleviate the suffering of displaced people in the North-East geo-political zone through the establishment of institutions and programs like the National Emergency

Management Agency (NEMA), which has been domesticated at the State Government level as State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA); the National Commission for Refugees (NCFR), which was expanded into the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCRMI); the North-East Development Commission (NEDC) and the Presidential Committee on North-East Initiative (PCNI). However, Itumo and Nwefuru (2016) argue that the establishment of these institutions and programs lacks effective delivery of strategies to resolve the challenges of IDPs in Nigeria.

The provision of temporary IDP camps seems to be the most important measure that the government has taken to address the IDP problem while keeping a blind eye on the plight of the undocumented category of displaced persons. Other challenges constraining the effective management of IDPs identified by previous studies include poor funding, corruption, overlapping IDP management policies and institutions, unpreparedness, and negative attitudes of host communities, among other things (Obikaeze & Onuoha, 2017; Osagioduwa & Oluwakorede, 2016; Nasa'i, 2018). The host community often feels insecure by the presence of IDPs who may resort to anti-social behaviors, as a coping mechanism. For instance, on the 25th of March 2017, the Borno Command of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) arrested 3 IDPs for allegedly vandalizing high-tension cables belonging to the Yola Electricity Distribution Company, which supplied electricity to Konduga and Bama, in Borno State, Nigeria (Oseni, 2017).

Itumo and Nwefuru (2016) argue that IDPs have the potential to destabilize peace in the host community, given that high level of impoverishment in displacement coupled with a negative perception of IDPs by the host community can create a background for future clashes and conflict. Similarly, maltreatment of IDPs can become a grievance against which IDP communities unite. The study argues further that in protracted situations, there is a greater probability that IDPs will become involved in political violence and susceptible to militant recruitment. In the next section, the correlation between forced displacement and insecurity is guided by relevant theories.

Theoretical Framework

The Migration Theory and the Intergroup Threat Theory provide a theoretical framework for this study by way of explaining the experience of IDPs who live in non-camp settings, and the conditions under which they enter into host communities, with attendant security implications for all parties involved. On the one hand, the Migration Theory was made popular in the Laws of Migration, as developed by Ernest Ravenstein (1889) to explain population movement. The theory was re-formulated by Everette S. Lee (1966) to emphasize the push and pull factors of migration: whereas unfavorable conditions push people out of their usual place of residence, more convenient conditions pull them in the opposite direction, bearing in mind that obstacles (distance and transportation) have to be overcome before migration is completed.

The framework of push and pull factors of migration explains internal displacement in the northern geo-political zones in Nigeria, in the sense that mass displacement in these areas is, to a large extent, the outcome of incessant deadly attacks by Boko Haram members and bandits since 2008. Therefore, loss of lives, livelihoods, and the general situation of insecurity in the zone constitute the push factors that force people to leave their communities of origin for safer communities. Conversely, the relative safety of communities in other parts of the country, coupled with the likelihood of better employment opportunities “pull” them into places like Kwara state.

On the other hand, Intergroup Threat Theory propounded by Stephan, Ybarra, and Rios (2015) posits that intergroup threat is experienced when members of one group perceive that another group is in a position to harm them. The theory advances two models of threat – realistic threats, which have to do with competition over scarce resources and or physical harm; and symbolic threats, which arise from differences in culture, moral values, standards, and/or beliefs. The dangers of insecurity posed by the presence of IDPs who live in non-camp settings to host communities, the extra layer of pressure on livelihood opportunities in the informal labor market, as well as the fear of conflict, arguably align with realistic threats of the Intergroup Threat Theory. Symbolic differences are found in cultural values, languages, and traditions even though members of host communities and IDPs are Nigerians.

Discussion of findings

This empirical study adopted a mixed method of inquiry to obtain qualitative and quantitative data. It utilized the Multi-stage, Snowball, and purposive sampling techniques in determining the study population, using the Taro Yamane method: $n = N / 1 + N(e)$. Six Local Government Areas (LGAs), namely Moro, Patigi, Ilorin West, Ilorin South, Offa, and Irepodun with a projected population of 1,570,200 were purposively selected. Out of a study population of 200 participants, 188 copies of a questionnaire were retrieved. Exploratory data were also gathered from focus group discussions (FGDs) and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data gathered from the fieldwork were analyzed with a descriptive statistical procedure using simple percentages and frequencies while qualitative data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis Software. The data analysis was intended to address the research questions about the identification of unregistered IDPs within a few selected host communities, the security implications associated with their unexpected presence in such communities, and the evaluation of strategies put in place by the Kwara State government to deal with the menace of insecurity. The discussion revolves around the study's findings as follows.

1. Locating Non-camp settings in the selected Host Communities

Responding to a questionnaire, resident participants listed out different kinds of shelter arrangements for IDPs who live in non-camp settings (NCS), in host communities in Kwara State: informal settlements (78%); host families (70%); and rented accommodation (60%). Data generated from FGDs and KIIs corroborated the presence of IDPs in such informal settlements: host families, rented accommodation, and uncompleted and abandoned buildings.

It was noted that participant IDPs who live with host families were sheltered by the latter under two types of arrangement. The first is based on social connections that existed between hosts and IDPs before displacement. IDPs were emphatic that this type of arrangement was not brokered by any intermediary and that they were accepted by their hosts on the strength of their previous relationship. The second arrangement revolves around social connections within the Hausa communities where IDPs seek refuge. Under this arrangement, Hausa leaders (the Seriki or Wakili Hausa) facilitate shelter, mostly, for women and children, to reduce their vulnerabilities.

IDPs who live in uncompleted and abandoned buildings claimed that they sought and obtained the permission of the owners, through Hausa community leaders. However, it is not in all such cases that permission is obtained. For instance, a family of IDPs from Kebbi State took shelter in a dilapidated and abandoned building in Offa, Offa LGA without the permission of its owners. According to the family head, the decision to occupy the building was taken to address the challenge of sleeping in the open when it rains, as he does not have a steady source of income to pay rent. The study also found that IDPs who live in informal settlements in host communities in Kwara State are located on the outskirts of towns and villages, where they constructed makeshift shelters on parcels of land released to them by their host communities. This type of setting was found in Oloru and Iyana Momo in Moro LGA; Oko Olowo in Ilorin West LGA; and Olomi Funfun, Kere-Aje Iloa and Gbosun in Offa LGA.

2. Security Implications of IDPs in Host Communities

Quantitative data show that security concerns have the highest frequency at 81%. This is closely followed by concerns about threats to physical and mental health (73%). It is pertinent to note that perceptions of vulnerability to attacks (64%); the possibility of demographic shock (60%); concerns about competition for patronage (54%); condescending attitude of the host population (52%), and Indoctrination (33%) are latent platforms for the outbreak of conflict, which could result into a breach of public peace, and possibly secondary displacement for IDPs.

Through FGDs and KIIs, the same conclusion was reached: the presence of IDPs in NCS has security implications for host communities, as well as for the IDPs in Kwara State.

For instance, most of the IDPs enter into host communities with varying degrees of impoverishment and no visible means of livelihood. Suffice it to say, that residents feel threatened by the increasing population of the IDPs who entered their communities in the night, coupled with the absence of profiling systems. Arguably, the perceived or actual threats to the safety of lives and property of residents who participated in the study stem from their inability to identify the IDPs who live in their communities. In addition, the concerns expressed by the host population and the IDPs have clear undertones of threat to all seven major areas of Human Security.

3. Strategies used by the Kwara State government

In explaining the strategies adopted by the Kwara State Government to address IDP issues, the Secretary of the Kwara State Emergency and Relief Services Office remarked that efforts of the State Government consist of setting up and managing a camp, which could either be temporary or permanent. The Management of the Zonal Office of the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants & Internally Displaced Persons (NCRMI) described their collaborative activities with the Kwara State Government, particularly, in the area of facilitation of relief materials for victims of displacement-inducing events in the State.

The study found that the major strategy of the Kwara State Government is setting up shelters, as temporary IDP camps in situations of internal population displacement. An instance of such was in Alapa, Asa LGA, where an outbreak of violence between Pastoralists and Farmers resulted in population displacement. In addition, the State Government also responds to situations of population displacement by setting up an Emergency and Relief Committee to oversee the welfare of displaced persons. The committee is saddled with the responsibility of distributing food and other relief materials to IDPs. The submission of the Secretary of Kwara State Emergency and Relief Services Office reveals that the State Government's strategy for disaster-induced displacement is more reactive than proactive. This is particularly true in the area of setting up committees, whose responsibilities start when displacement has already occurred.

The zonal office of NCRM&I confirmed that the IDP camp in Patigi LGA was the only permanent IDP camp in Kwara State, established by the Federal Government and designated to receive people displaced by flood in the area. The camp has several blocks of rooms that shelter victims of perennial floods in the area. During displacement, the State Government in conjunction with relevant stakeholders provides relief materials for displaced persons in the camp. However, with a 10,000-capacity, the Patigi camp lacks basic amenities. Not only is it mostly vacant for about seven months a year, but its location in the Kwara North Senatorial District makes it inaccessible to IDPs from Kwara Central and South Senatorial Districts. The State Emergency and Relief Services Office acknowledged the presence of IDPs who live in non-camp settings across Kwara

State but there was no reference to government-facilitated safety net, official monitoring and evaluation systems, or any other mechanism for tracking either the locations or movement of such people for possible assistance.

Conclusion

Internal displacement of populations has attracted the attention of government and non-governmental organizations the world over in recent times and led to policy formulation and implementation. Unlike refugees whose protection befalls the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in collaboration with host countries as stipulated in the 1951 Convention, it is the sole responsibility of national governments to see to it that citizens who fall within the category of internally displaced persons (IDPs) receive adequate assistance. Irrespective of the causes of displacement (natural or violent-induced disasters), IDPs are usually registered and settled in specifically designed camps from where they ought to receive hand-outs. Following many years of insecurity in the northeast of Nigeria provoked by the Boko Haram insurgency, Kwara State in the north-central geopolitical zone has witnessed an influx of desperate citizens in search of a safer abode, away from the conflict zones. Through a questionnaire and a series of interviews, this paper has found out that there is no official settlement for the many survivors of insurgency who moved into Kwara State. The only permanent IDP camp established by the Federal Government and located at Patigi LGA is designed to attend to the victims of flooding and similar disasters within the State. Consequently, undocumented IDPs from the northeast have ended up fending for themselves in non-camp settings such as rented accommodation, uncompleted buildings, school premises, market places to name but a few. They constitute a menace to peace and security in host communities. In other words, residents feel insecure because of the increasing population of the IDPs who enter their communities at night. Their physical and mental health is threatened in the face of increasing demographic imbalance. Above all, a high level of impoverishment threatens all seven major components of human security for both IDPs and host communities. The study has also found that the Kwara State Emergency and Relief Services Office which was created 16 years ago is yet to be upgraded to a full-fledged State Emergency Management Agency. This delay constitutes a limitation to the State's capacity to manage internal displacement optimally. Given that the state of harmony (Kwara) is a preferred location for displaced persons coming from other states, the government should therefore strengthen, in collaboration with Federal agencies, the capacity of the Zonal Office of National Commission for Refugees, Migrants & Internally Displaced Persons (NCRMI) to establish an efficient profiling system for all IDPs to ensure adequate interventions according to internationally accepted best practices.

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Afghanistan: The Economic Impact of Armed Conflict

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Abstract: This study examines the economic impact of armed conflict in Afghanistan. During the armed conflict between 1978 and 2021, the country received \$88 billion in official development assistance (ODA) and over \$136 billion in war-induced USAID funding. We found that the one-year Afghan armed conflict, with an average of 17,661 battle-related deaths, increases the GDP per capita by at least 1.9%. Comparatively, a one-year US-led war relative to a USSR-led war increases the GDP per capita by at least 5.7%; in contrast, a one-year civil war reduces it by 4.1%. In addition, our cost estimation suggests that between 2002 and 2021, at least \$40.9 ± 5% billion (45.9%) of the Afghan state budget is spent on war-related and war-affected institutions. This is equal to 1,062% of Afghanistan's total GDP in 2002 and 280% in 2021. Moreover, this study will be helpful in understanding the implications of the Sustainable Development Goals and achieving specific targets such as Goal 8 (economic growth) and Goal 16 (peace and inclusive societies) in Afghanistan.

Keywords. Economic impact, GDP, armed conflict, USSR-led War, US-led War, civil war, Afghanistan.

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1. Introduction

Conventional wisdom argues that armed conflict destroys the social, political, and economic infrastructure of human society. Armed conflicts as societal and political disturbance have surged since 1946, with the Upsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) dataset recording at least 2,626 armed conflicts and an estimated 11 million battle-related deaths (Davies *et al.*, 2023; Gleditsch *et al.*, 2002). Notably, the post-9/11 US-led war on terror alone accounts for over 940,000 death tolls in war zones, with an influx of economic costs exceeding \$8 trillion only for U.S. taxpayers (Savell, 2023; Crawford, 2021; Watson Institute, 2022). Tragically, these unexpected costs haven't ended the flames of violence. The Global Terrorism Dataset (GTD) reveals a 441% increase in terrorist attacks between 2001 and 2020 (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism [START], 2022). Moreover, the human cost of displacement mirrors this trend, with the number of global refugees increasing by 29% in a single year, from 27 million in 2021 to over 35 million in 2022 (World Bank, 2023). Even global economic growth is predicted to decrease from 6% in 2021 to 2.7% in 2023 (IMF, 2022). Arguably, the recent devastation in the Hamas-Israel war stands as grim evidence of this escalating crisis. Israeli bombings from October 7, 2023, to January 24, 2024, inflicted economic ruin and claimed 25,700 Palestinian lives, with over 63,000 others wounded in the Gaza Strip and at least 60% of houses damaged (OCHA, 2024 January 24). Similarly, Hamas attacks are also responsible for 1,200 Israeli lives. These startling statistics depict the immeasurable and catastrophic human and financial impact that conflict exerts in our interconnected world.

Unfortunately, human lives and global security are being severely impacted by the ongoing political unrest and armed conflict, mainly in Afghanistan, the Middle East, Ukraine, and several African nations. However, Afghanistan, as a stark example, has been burning in the flames of continuous armed conflict for over four decades. The Cold War's legacy of superpower rivalries between the US and USSR is known as the primary source of the emergence of armed conflict in Afghanistan (e.g., Dupree, 1980; Goodson, 2001; Kakar, 1997). In particular, the Soviet-backed establishment of a communist Afghan state in 1978 and the invasion of the USSR served as the impetus for the US response to the anti-USSR resistance in 1979, which intensified the flames of armed conflict in Afghanistan (Kakar, 1997). This proxy armed conflict resulted in massive social, political, and economic destruction. As a result, thousands of innocent individuals were killed and tortured, the economy collapsed, and insecurity and social anarchy surrounded the Afghan civil population. Moreover, protracted conflict totally destroyed infrastructure, leaving behind a wasteland of shattered roads, schools, hospitals, and homes. Massive internal displacement, refugees, loss of livelihoods, and brutality expanded in every part of the country. Institutions collapsed under constant attack, breeding the ground for authoritarian nightmares with different radical opposite factions. Yet, the Afghan

people welcomed the US invasion of the country in 2001 to make the country safe and sustain peace. The US alone provided over \$131 billion in US aid for Afghanistan between 2002 and 2021 (USAID, 2022). According to the World Bank (2023), additional donors provided Afghanistan with over \$88 billion in official development assistance (ODA). Ultimately, the withdrawal of the US in 2021 once again resulted in the backslide of the country into its historical darkness of violence, human rights destruction, suffering, and misery.

Undeniably, the interests of regional and international powers—particularly the US and the USSR—as well as internal turmoil have made an unescapable contribution to the descent of Afghanistan into chaos. However, this article does not seek the root causes of conflict but explores the economic impact it has on Afghan people. We argue that external military intervention, which involves pouring billions of dollars while keeping the war ongoing, may significantly contribute to the survival of the wartime national economy. Yet, this superficial appearance conceals the underlying true long-term economic destruction. In our first approach, this article delves into the impact of armed conflict separating into the USSR-led era, the civil war era, and the US-led war on Afghan per capita income. In the second approach, employing the government's national budget drafts and distinguishing war-related costs from non-war-related ones, we quantify the cost of armed conflict for the Afghan people. This specific combined novel analysis illuminates the true economic burden conflict places on Afghanistan, revealing the sectors and resources diverted from crucial development initiatives and sustainable prosperity. By distinguishing between the short-term economic boom brought on by the war-induced funds and the underlying economic atrophy, we shed light on the true economic effects of the conflict and contribute to a deeper understanding of conflicts in war-affected states like Afghanistan.

In our first approach, delving into the complex link between Afghan armed conflict and economic survival, this article examines two contrasting viewpoints in armed conflict literature. Some scholars, like Colier (1999), paint a stark picture of civil war's detrimental impact, highlighting capital flight and stunted economic progress. Ghobarah *et al.* (2003) and Imai & Weinstein (2000) further emphasize the long-term suffering and stifled investment triggered by civil wars. Moreover, political instability, terrorism, and armed conflict, as Barro (1991), Gaibullov & Sandler (2009), and Murdoch & Sandler (2004) demonstrate, cause a decrease in per capita GDP. Yet, opposite arguments by Koubi (2005), Olson (1982), and Herbst (1990) suggest that, under specific circumstances, conflicts can surprisingly stimulate economic expansion. Our investigation thoroughly examines these opposing theories within the Afghan context, revealing the nuanced dynamics at play in this war-torn nation. We provided evidence showing per capita income increased significantly during the USSR and the US eras, supporting the claims made by Koubi (2005), Olson (1982), and Herbst (1990). Nonetheless, our results

support the findings of Colier (1999) and Ghobarah *et al.* (2003) that the period of the Civil War saw a sharp decline in per capita income. It suggests that the external military intervened in the conflict by providing billions of dollars in financial and military support, which might have a positive impact on the economy temporarily.

In our second approach, we quantify the economic burden placed on Afghan people by decades of conflict. Due to a lack of data, we focus on the last two decades, 2002–2021. Measuring the financial cost of war on a nation's economy is notoriously complex. However, numerous studies across varied contexts have tackled this challenge, offering valuable insights applicable to Afghanistan. For instance, the cost of conflict for Nicaragua during 1980–1984, was estimated at a staggering 77% of the 1980 GDP (Fitzgerald, 1987). Similarly, Sri Lanka (Arunatilake *et al.*, 2001) and the Basque Country (Abandie & Gardeazabal, 2003) experienced significant economic contractions attributed to conflict and terrorism. Notably, Gates *et al.* (2012) provide a cross-sectional analysis suggesting a conflict with at least 2,500 battle-related deaths correlates with a 15% drop in GDP per capita, highlighting the profound impact on vulnerable populations. Our second strategy investigates Afghanistan's national budget in detail, taking cues from these many studies. We expose the true cost of fighting for the Afghan people by painstakingly distinguishing war-related from non-war expenditures.

This article, with two unique interconnected empirical approaches, will help in understanding the economic impact of armed conflict in Afghanistan. The first approach challenges conventional wisdom by arguing that external military invasions cause war in the short term compared to civil wars, which boost per capita income. Through this approach, we revealed that foreign-led conflict promotes Afghan per capita income in the short term. In our second approach, by quantifying the economic cost of war considering the state budget, we disclosed the real long-term economic effects of war on the country. If a large percentage of the state budget is allocated to defense and security, other critical sectors such as education, healthcare, and development will be severely impacted in the long run. However, using these two interrelated methods, our research addresses the intricate economic effects of the conflict in Afghanistan. This special synthesis of empirical research sheds light on the complex economic costs of conflict, including the short-term and real long-term effects. In addition, this study provides insightful information for understanding the influences of governmental actions intended to heal and reconstruct war-affected states such as Afghanistan, considering national resource allocation in the state budget.

2. Historical Background

In this section, we concisely delve into the historical background of Afghanistan from 1900 to 2023. Sixteen leaders have ruled Afghanistan from the 1900s onward, ranging in duration from two months to forty years (see Table 1). These mostly despot figures,

fueled by regional and global actors, birthed a succession of authoritarian regimes. Table 1 further depicts that one tyrant removed another ascendant, often ushered in on the disruptive tides of foreign intervention, coups, assassinations, and violent armed conflict. As a result, six non-violent and 10 violent military takeovers and coups took place during the power shift, with nine rulers projecting to death. Most profoundly, the nation's political roadmap was significantly affected by invasions from two superpowers—the US and the USSR—and a brutal civil war.

Table 1. Political transition and regime change in Afghanistan, 1900–2021.

No	Period	Duration	Head of state name	Political regime	Death cause	Transition
1	1901–1919	19-yr	Habibullah Khan	Monarchy	Assassinated	Peaceful*
2	1919–1929	10-yr	Amanullah Khan	Monarchy	Natural	Peaceful
3	1929–	9-mo	Habibullah Kalakani	Monarchy	Assassinated	Takeover
4	1929–1933	4-yr	Nadir Shah	Monarchy	Assassinated	Takeover
5	1933–1973	40-yr	Zahir Shah	Monarchy	Natural	Peaceful
6	1973–1978	5-yr	Dawood Khan	Republic	Assassinated	Coup
7	1978–1979	1.5-yr	Noor Mohammad Taraki	Democratic Republic	Assassinated	Coup
8	1979–	3-mo	Hafizullah Amin	Democratic Republic	Assassinated	Coup
9	1979–1986	6-yr	Babrak Karmal	Democratic Republic	Natural	Coup
10	1986–1992	6-yr	Najibullah Ahmadzai	Democratic Republic	Assassinated	Peaceful
11	1992–	2-mo	Sibghatullah Mojaddadi	Fundamental Islamic	Natural	Takeover
12	1992–1996	5-yr	Burhanuddin Rabbani	Fundamental Islamic	Assassinated	Peaceful
13	1996–2001	5-yr	M. Mohammad Omer	Radical Islamic	Assassinated	Takeover
14	2001–2014	14-yr	Hamid Karzai	Islamic Republic	Alive	Takeover
15	2014–2021	7-yr	Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai	Islamic Republic	Alive	Peaceful
16	2021–	-	M. Haibatullah Akhundzada	Radical Islamic	Alive	Takeover

Source: Author calculation from various historical books (Dupree, 1980; Goodson, 2001; Kakar, 1997; Lansford, 2017; Shahrani, 2002). * Our definition of a peaceful transition is that a ruler changes without conflict by passing away an autocrat and descending to power another autocrat from his family, or transferring from one despotic ruler to another in an agreement without conflict.

Table 2 further depicts the human costs of war in Afghanistan. In 1919, the Third Anglo-Afghan War resulted in Afghanistan's declaration of independence from British India, at the cost of over 3,000 Afghan combatants' lives (Lansford, 2017, p. 47). After independence, the revolutionary king launched a series of European-style liberalization initiatives to modernize the country (Dupree, 1980). These modernization efforts faced resistance from the deeply religious and tribal elites, who ignited a rebellion against the king's reforms (Kakar, 1997). The resultant political unrest and armed conflict persisted until the overthrow of the king in 1929, resulting in an estimated 20,000 conflict-related deaths (Lansford, 2017). Yet, from 1900 to 1978, a succession of monarchs

wielded absolute power, imposing various political ideologies and exacerbating the conflict between political and tribal elites, plunging the country into a protracted cycle of violent political instability (Table 1). Consequently, the Cold War rivalry between the USSR and the US was projected with the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviets. The proxy war between both sides claimed a staggering battle-related death toll of at least 500,000 lives (Table 2). Following the fall of the Afghan communist state in 1992, a new phase of civil war erupted among various anti-communist factions, lasting until the US invasion in 2001. The civil war accounts for at least 51,000 direct deaths. Moreover, from 2002 to 2021, the US-led war on terror claimed over 242,000 lives as well. Tragically, the fighting continued even after the US withdrawal, with K-ISIS and the anti-Taliban opposition keeping the conflict alive. In 2022, Afghanistan recorded at least 1,375 conflict-related fatalities. Overall, Afghanistan has endured at least 52 years of armed conflicts in the past century, resulting in over 817,000 battle-related deaths (Maoz *et al.*, 2019; Davies *et al.*, 2023; Gleditsch *et al.*, 2002; Lansford, 2017).

Table 2. Armed conflict and its human cost in Afghanistan, 1919–2022

Year	Duration	Description	Killings
1919–	1-yr	Third Anglo-Afghan war	3,000
1924–1929	6-yr	Anti-reformist rebellions	20,250
1978–1991	14-yr	Soviet invasion	498,781
1992–2001	10-yr	Civil war	51,868
2002–2021	20-yr	US invasion	242,744
2022–	1-yr	K-ISIS and Anti-Taliban resistance	1,375
Total	52-yr		817,768

Source: Author calculation. Data from the Correlates of War (COW) dataset (Maoz *et al.*, 2021) for the period of 1924–1929, from the UCDP Battle-Related Deaths Dataset version (Davies, Pettersson, & Öberg, 2023; Gleditsch *et al.*, 2002) dataset for the period of 1978–2022, and from historical book (Lansford, 2017:49) for the Third Anglo-Afghan war have been collected. Human casualties on the best estimation approach have been considered, whereas the COW and UCDP datasets provide low, high, and best estimations.

Table 3 depicts the socioeconomic chronology of Afghanistan during the period 1978–2022. Afghanistan’s long-running armed conflict has had a devastating impact on the country’s economy, plunging it into a state of perpetual decline. In 1960, Afghanistan ranked 6th from the bottom in the world in terms of GDP per capita, with a meager \$62 (World Bank, 2023). However, by 1977, the year before the outbreak of war, Afghanistan recorded significant progress, climbing to 21st place from the bottom with a GDP per capita of \$232 (see Table 3). Although the Soviet invasion had a positive impact on economic growth, the subsequent civil war-shattered Afghanistan’s economic gains. GDP per capita plummeted, and by 2002, the country had once again sunk to 5th from the bottom, with a GDP per capita of just \$183. Despite two decades of US-led reconstruction

efforts, Afghanistan's economy remains in tatters. In 2021, after the withdrawal of the US, the country ranked second from the bottom in the world in terms of GDP per capita, with a mere \$363 (World Bank, 2023). Similarly, the trade deficit increased from 6.7% in 1977 to 81% in 2021 (Table 3). The conflict has also triggered a massive internal displacement crisis, with a large number of refugees and a significant shift from rural to urban areas. The sharp population increase has further exacerbated socio-economic problems. In 2021, Afghanistan's population was estimated to be over 40 million, with 73% living in rural areas. This represents a substantial increase from 1977, when Afghanistan's population was approximately 12 million, with over 85% residing in rural areas (Table 3).

Moreover, the protracted armed conflict in Afghanistan has triggered a mass displacement crisis, with the number of refugees skyrocketing from a mere 0.5 million in 1979 to a staggering 5.5 million in 2021, scattered across neighboring and Western countries (see Table 3). Internally, an estimated 4.3 million displaced people were reported in 2022 (World Bank, 2023). This relentless conflict has left an indelible mark on Afghanistan, claiming nearly 1 million battle-related deaths, leaving 1.5 million disabled, creating 2 million widows, and orphaning over 18% of children under five (Table 3). The conflict has also severely hampered education, with only 38% of children able to attend secondary school (Central Statistics Organization, 2017). The economic fallout has been equally devastating, with 97% of the population living in poverty and an alarming 92% facing food insecurity in 2022 (Watson Institute, 2022). Despite these immense challenges, Afghanistan has made some strides in improving mortality rates and life expectancy. Life expectancy has also increased from 46 in 1977 to 64 in 2021 (Table 3). However, unprotected drinking water and poor sanitation still significantly increase the risk of under-five-year and infant mortality in Afghanistan (Ghafoori, 2022; Ehsan *et al.*, 2021), but the mortality rate has declined from 262 per 1,000 live births in 1977 to 55 in 2021. Table 3 also highlights how the armed conflict in Afghanistan has systematically eroded the country's institutions. Since the outbreak of conflict in 1978, civil liberties, educational equality, women's rights, and political corruption have all deteriorated significantly. The V-Dem dataset measures these indices on a scale of 0 to 1, with lower scores indicating weaker institutions (Coppedge *et al.*, 2021).

In 1977, before the conflict's inception, civil liberties were scored at 0.224. However, by 2002, this index had plummeted to an alarming 0.026, indicating that civil liberties had virtually disappeared during the war. Even after the US withdrawal in 2021, this ratio remains significantly lower than the pre-war level, at 0.173. The war has also taken a heavy toll on political and economic institutions, which are crucial for safeguarding human rights, fostering democracy, and ensuring sustainability. Following the US withdrawal, all aspects of democracy in Afghanistan have regressed dramatically to pre-1977 levels (Table 3). However, during the democratic era, ethnicity became a significant

Table 3. Socioeconomic chronology of Afghanistan, 1978–2022

	1977 ^a	2002 ^c	2021 ^e
Macroeconomic perspective			
GDP, Total (Billion US\$)	2.935	3.850	14.580
GDP per capita (Current US \$)	232	183	363
GDP per capita annual change (%)	13.18	-41.15	-29.64
Trade deficit (%)	6.71	95.92	81.33
Poverty, population (%)		80 ^d	97 ⁱ
Demographic and social perspective			
Population, Total (Million)	12	21	40
Rural population (%)	85	77	73
Mortality under five (per 1,000 live births)	262.4	121.2	55.7
School attendance, secondary (%)			38 ⁱ
Orphan among children under five (%)			18.4 ⁱ
Food insecurity, population (%)		62 ^d	92 ^f
Refugee (Million)	0.5 ^b	2.5	5.6
Internally displaced (Million)			4.3 ^f
Armed conflict deaths (Millions)			0.9 ^f
Disabled population (Million)			1.5 ^f
Number of Widow (Million)			2 ^f
Life expectancy (Year)	46.4	54.7	64.3 ^f
Institutional perspective			
Civil liberty index	0.224	0.026 ^d	0.173 ^f
Education equality	0.952	0.092 ^d	0.168 ^f
Women civil liberty	0.157	0.022 ^d	0.011 ^f
Political corruption	0.513	0.762 ^d	0.448 ^f

Source: Author calculation from the World Bank (2023), V-Dem (Coppedge *et al.*, 2023), UCDP Battle-Related Deaths Dataset version 23.1 (Davies, Pettersson, & Öberg, 2023), the Correlates of War (COW) (Maoz *et al.*, 2019), Watson Costs of War Project (Watson Costs of War, 2022), and National Demographic Health Survey (Central Statistics Organization, 2017) datasets.

^a Indicates 1977, the year before the war started.

^b Indicates 1979, the year of the USRR invasion of Afghanistan.

^c Indicates 2002, the one year after the US invasion.

^d Indicates 2000, the one year before the US invasion.

^e Indicates 2021, the withdrawal of the US, and the collapse of the Afghan government.

^f Indicates 2022, the first year of the Taliban in power (second time).

ⁱ Indicates 2015, the National Demographic and Health Survey (2015DHS).

behavior of voters (Yolchi & Hazem, 2019), female child marriage increased (Ehsan, Ghafoori, & Akrami, 2021), civil servant effectiveness decreased (Ghafoori, Marat, & Rezaie, 2019), while some improvement recorded in national development programs (Yolchi & Ahmadi, 2021).

3. Theoretical Argument and Hypothesis

Multiple theories exist to interpret the prolonged conflict in Afghanistan. Nation-state stability may be impacted by resource competition (Organski & Kugler, 1980), hegemonic dominance (Chomsky, 2000), and domestic political instability (Sambanis, 2004), as well as socioeconomic disparities (Stewart, 2002). Understanding how the conflict has impacted Afghanistan's political roadmap requires unraveling this intricate network of interdependencies. A sobering case study of the intricate linkages between internal divides and external manipulations is provided by the protracted conflict in Afghanistan. Researchers believe that a powerful mix of domestic strife stoked by conflicting political and socioeconomic philosophies, as well as the strategies of global superpowers competing for supremacy and influence, is to blame for the start of the war.

Figure 1 illustrates this intricate interaction very well in the context of Afghanistan. It is clear that the 1978 infusion of foreign military support, mainly from the USSR to the Marxist regime and the US-led coalition to anti-Soviet rebels, turned political protests into full-fledged combat confrontations. It's interesting to see that recipients and forms of foreign aid changed over time (see Figure 1). Although the USSR mainly provided support to the newly installed government, the coalition led by the US distributed military aid to a broader range of anti-Soviet organizations via Pakistan (Shahrani, 2002). Interestingly, foreign military aid, both in terms of quantity and variety, significantly increased during the US-led War on Terror while the number of armed opposition groups decreased (see Figure 1). The fact that at least two armed organizations (K-ISIS and National Resistance Front – NRF) are still there and opposing the Taliban regime, however, shows that the fight has not ended with the US pullout. Thus, Figure 1 highlights the long-lasting impact of both international intervention and internal strife on

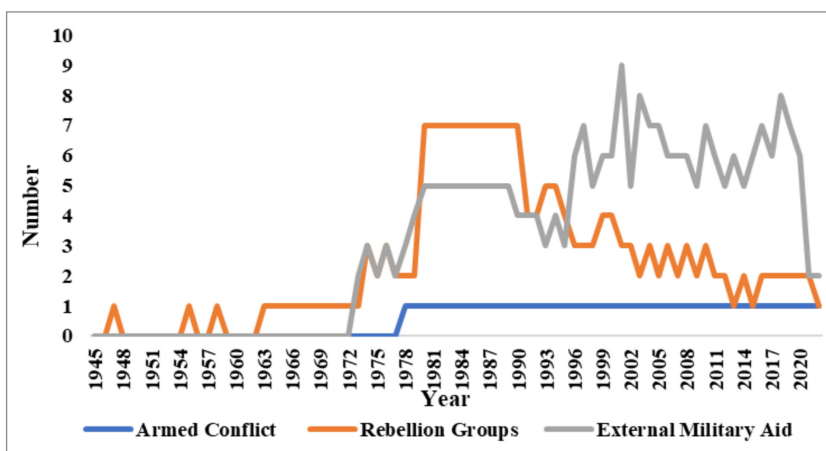


Figure 1. Conflict, rebellion, and external military aid, 1945–2022 (Meier *et al.*, 2022).

Afghanistan's ongoing instability. Comprehending this complex network of variables continues to be essential for formulating efficacious strategies and promoting enduring stability in this nation devastated by conflict.

Figure 2 depicts the military assistance and foreign aid that the US and USSR provided to Afghanistan throughout the protracted conflict. The cost of war for the USSR in Afghanistan was estimated at over \$48 billion between 1980 and 1986 (CIA, 2000). In addition, between 1980 and 1989, the USSR provided Afghanistan with considerable military assistance, totaling 9.13 billion rubles (Minkov & Smolyneec, 2007). However, finding data on Soviet economic aid is still a challenge. Post-2001 foreign aid has surpassed all previous projections. According to World Bank statistics, Afghanistan received official development aid (ODA) of \$88.6 billion between 1978 and 2021 (World Bank, 2023). As per USAID (2022), the United States alone has provided over \$136 billion in foreign aid between 1978 and 2021. Notably, foreign aid to Afghanistan during the civil war (1992–2001) nearly stopped, in contrast to the deluge of aid that took place during the USSR-backed war and the US-led war on terror. A mere \$2.12 billion in foreign aid was injected into Afghanistan during the civil war (World Bank, 2023). The distribution of data in Figure 2 clearly shows how the emergence of a foreign-backed war in Afghanistan and international aid are critically related. Highlighting the possibility of short-term advantages in the economy from the inflow of foreign capital in a war supported by foreign countries, while falling in a civil war.

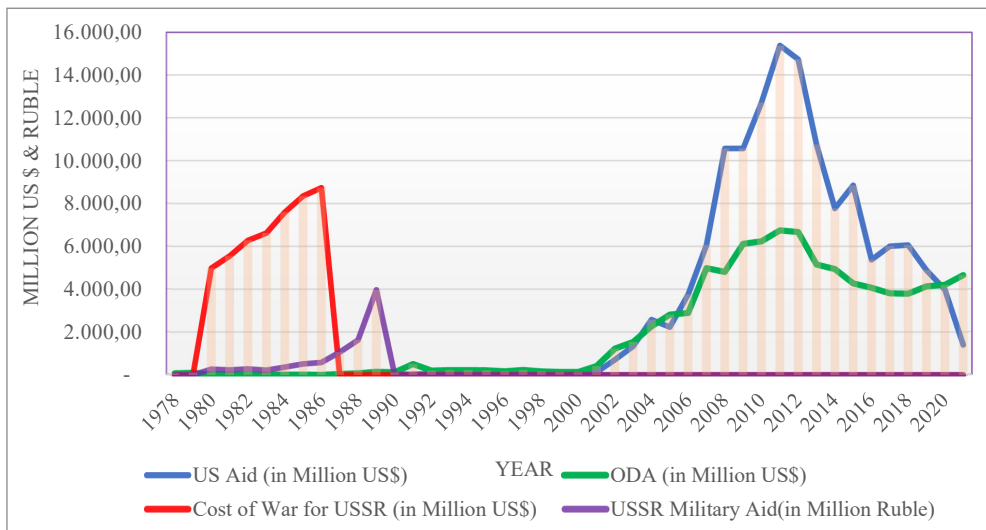


Figure 2. US aid, USSR aid, and ODA, 1978–2021.

Furthermore, Afghanistan's long-running conflict has a lasting and pernicious effect on the country's economy, making the illegal opium trade a major source of revenue

for the country's rural communities. This sad truth is eloquently illustrated in Figure 3, which shows a clear association between rising opium cultivation and intensifying warfare. The data presents a disconcerting image: following the Taliban's ascent in 1994, opium cultivation increased rapidly, then decreased momentarily in 2001 before increasing dramatically again under the US occupation. Data in Figure 3 indicates that opium cultivation has increased by 32% in 2022 relative to 2021, which is concerning because it continues this trend under the Taliban administration. Prompted by this illegal activity, Afghan farmers earned an estimated \$1.4 billion in 2021—nearly thirty percent of the country's total production from agriculture (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2022b). This opium trafficking dependency has frightening global ramifications. Afghanistan supplied an astounding 80% of the world's opiate needs in 2022, which significantly increased the flow of heroin and opium (UNODC, 2022b). A frightening prediction made by the UNODC is that 350–580 tons of heroin might be produced in 2022 alone (UNODC, 2022a). This worry is further reinforced by the fact that wholesale heroin prices have skyrocketed in the US, rising from \$5,907 per kilogram in Afghanistan to a startling \$59,500 (UNODC, 2022a). This sharp data presents a clear image: The protracted conflict in Afghanistan creates a profitable but dangerous setting for opium trafficking. It is imperative to comprehend the intricate relationship between war, per capita income, and illicit economies in order to formulate efficacious policies that foster enduring stability and mitigate the suffering of the Afghan populace.

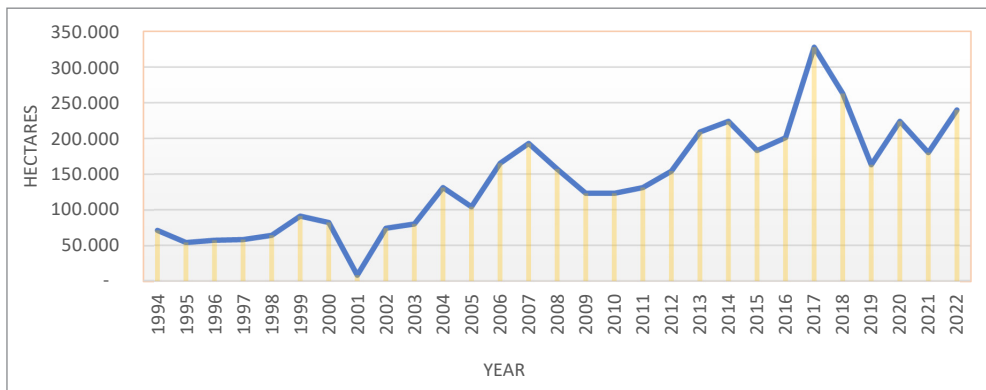


Figure 3. Opium cultivation in Afghanistan, 1994–2022.

Afghan GDP per capita is a complicated waltz partner of illicit opium trafficking, foreign aid, and war. Theories such as hegemonic (Chomsky, 2000) competition and internal fissures (Stewart, 2002) shed light on the conflict's causes, but a more thorough analysis is required to determine how they affect income. Foreign aid worth billions, meant to promote development (Abate, 2022), and improved infrastructure (Donaubauer *et al.*, 2016) is still a double-edged sword in the context of Afghanistan. The opium trafficking

clogs the channels even further. We provide a graphic representation of the per capita income in Afghanistan from 1960 to 2021 (Figure 4) to bolster our arguments. According to the facts, the presence of foreign nations considerably raises per capita income through foreign aid. For example, the GDP per capita grew dramatically from \$255 in 1978 to \$284 in 1979 when the USSR invaded the nation (see Figure 4). The graph also demonstrates how Afghanistan's per capita income dropped sharply by \$123 in 2000 following the USSR's withdrawal and the descent of the civil war. The GDP per capita increased with the US invasion and peaked at \$663 in 2012. However, after the US withdrew, it drastically decreased to \$308 in 2022. Overall, Figure 4 indicates that wars sponsored by foreign countries foster the expansion of both non-financial and financial assistance, as well as an increase in illicit economic activity and short-term economic growth. It also indicates that when foreign assistance is stopped, the economy would crash once more in fragile states like Afghanistan.

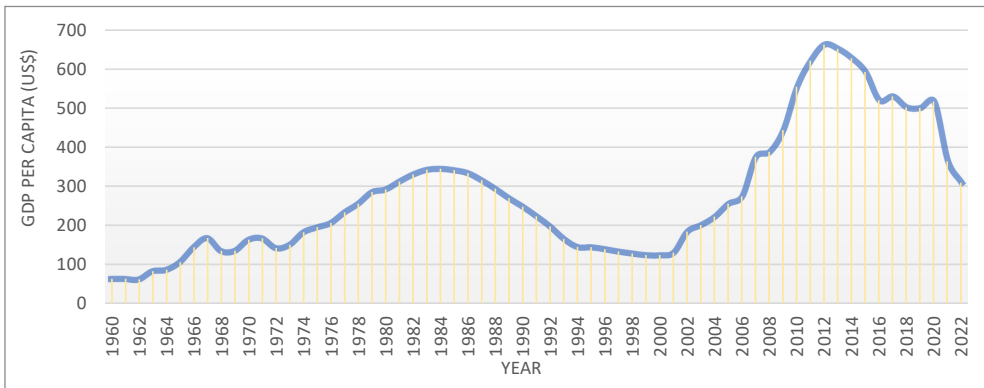


Figure 4. GDP per capita in Afghanistan, 1960–2021

The literature gives less attention to country-based studies that look into how heavily foreign-backed wars affect economic expansion and what the national economy's primary resources are during a war. According to our above arguments, we developed the following hypotheses to simplify our contributions: We hypothesize that the active participation of foreign powers in a conflict by invasion is transient and beneficial to the economic expansion of the invaded country during the invasion period (**Hypothesis 1**). As shown in Figures 2 and 4, we previously explained how the GDP per capita dramatically increased as a result of the USSR and US invasion of Afghanistan and how this rise took the opposite form when both countries withdrew. Furthermore, in Figures 2 and 4, we present that during the civil war (1992–2001), international aid and, consequently, per capita income significantly declined. It also allows us to advance our second hypothesis (**Hypothesis 2**), which states that civil wars hurt per capita income. Due to the direct military participation of foreign nations in the conflict through invasions, the

intervenor supply both economic and military support, which momentarily boosts the growth of the host economy, to keep the government in place and ensure its economic survival. In addition, as shown in Figure 2, Afghanistan has received a significant amount of official development assistance (ODA) over the past 45 years of protracted violence. This reasoning forces us to formulate our third hypothesis, which holds that foreign aid promotes GDP per capita temporarily during conflict (**Hypothesis 3**). Additionally, as Figure 3 illustrates, opium cultivation rose dramatically throughout the conflict. Finally, we conclude that Afghan GDP per capita is significantly associated with opium cultivation as well (**Hypothesis 4**).

4. Data and Econometric Model

In this study, five robust Upsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), World Database Indicators (WDI), Variety of Democracy (V-Dem), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) datasets have been employed. For the GDP per capita, the dependent variable, we use the World Bank's WDI and V-Dem datasets¹. We linked the armed conflict with Afghan per capita income based on battle-related deaths. The battle-related death data for our study period is provided in the UCDP Battle-Related Deaths Dataset (Davies, Pettersson & Öberg, 2023; Gleditsch *et al.*, 2002). The UCDP defines an armed conflict as a contested dispute involving the state in which at least 25 battle-related deaths occur in a particular conflict year as a result of the use of force by two sides, at least one of which is the state government. Utilizing data from the UCDP, we estimated that Afghanistan experienced at least 17,661 battle-related deaths annually on average between 1978 and 2022².

The official development assistance (ODA) data and population were extracted from the WDI dataset (World Bank, 2023). Similarly, data for opium cultivation is obtained from the UNODC (2022) dataset and US foreign aid from the USAID (2022) dataset. Furthermore, the UCDP External Support Dataset (ESD) was applied to track the data for the types and number of external military aid and the number of rebellion groups involved in the war in Afghanistan (Meier *et al.*, 2022). The UCDP's ESD categorizes external military support into ten types, including provision of weapons, funding, training, logistics, intelligence, territory, and so on. According to the UCDP's ESD dataset, in the context of Afghanistan, on average, 3.5 armed rebellion groups were involved in the war, receiving external military aid between 1978 and 2021.

1 The data for GDP per capita during 1982 and 2001 in the WDI dataset is incomplete. The V-Dem datasets (Coppedge *et al.*, 2021) provide an estimation index for GDP per capita. Using the imputation technique applied to the V-Dem dataset, we filled this gap.

2 The total battle-related deaths for the period 1978–2022 were estimated at least 794,768. The average is 17,661 deaths.

To select our statistical model, we cautiously tested the regression assumptions³. The result of the pre-estimations test encourages us to apply OLS regression in this study. Furthermore, our dependent variable (GDP per capita), is normally distributed. Using the natural logarithm form of the variables, we take into account the model assumptions that have been violated, such as serial autocorrelation and heteroskedasticity issues, and we perform the regression model with robust errors as well. To have a robust result, we developed six individual models by including each variable in our base model separately (Table 4). Finally, in our second approach, to quantify the economic cost of the war for Afghanistan, we consider the Afghan national budget drafts⁴. Due to a lack of data, we focus on the last two decades of US presence in Afghanistan, 2002–2021.

5. Empirical Results

Table 4 displays the findings from the OLS regression study of the impact of armed conflict on Afghanistan's per capita income from 1978 to 2021. To test Hypotheses 1 and 2, we split the Afghan conflict into three phases: the Soviet invasion (1978–1991), the civil war (1992–2001), and the US invasion (2002–2021). This allows us to account for the effect of a foreign-backed war on per capita income in comparison to the civil war. In Figure 4, we illustrate how the GDP per capita during the Soviet invasion period increased, followed by a sharp decline to less than \$200 after the Soviets withdrew in 1989. The graph also shows that per capita income in the US era has increased significantly, coming close to \$700 in 2012. With the US's exit, the GDP per capita has decreased dramatically once again; in 2021, it fell by \$363 from \$516 the year before. It implies that there was a strong correlation between economic expansion and conflicts supported by foreign powers during the war.

In model 1, we tested this scenario by estimating the impact of log battle-related deaths (a proxy for war) on log GDP per capita. The result indicates that the association between

3 The normality test for our dependent variable through the joint test result of Skewness and Kurtosis with a p-value of 0.074, the Shapiro-Francia W test with a p-value of 0.115, and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (Combined K-S) with a p-value of 0.767 indicates that the dependent variable is normally distributed. The Breusch-Pagan/Cook-Weisberg test for heteroskedasticity and the Ramsey RESET test for omitted variables indicate that the model suffers from heteroskedasticity and serial autocorrelation. The multicollinearity test was done through VIF, except for the population with 10.22; for all other variables, the VIF value is less than 6, with a mean VIF of 4.3, which indicates that the model does not suffer from multicollinearity problems.

4 The Ministry of Finance of Afghanistan (MoF) prepares the national annual budget of the nation. The draft of the last two decades is available on the website or in print, but the draft of the first two decades of war is neither on the website nor in print. First, we incorporate the last two decades to calculate the economic cost of the war in Afghanistan. Then we rationalized our finding, considering GDP for the previous two decades and generating several assumptions. For more details, please refer to the online appendix.

GDP per capita and armed conflict is significant and positive. The positive coefficient of 0.201 implies that a one-year armed conflict with an average of 17,661 battle-related deaths increases the GDP per capita by about 1.965%⁵. With a negative coefficient of -0.422, the model also demonstrates how the Civil War era considerably reduced GDP per capita when compared to the Soviet War. Similarly, the US war era positively and greatly enhanced per capita income in comparison to the Soviet conflict, as indicated by a log-form coefficient of 0.586. It suggests that the one-year US war with an average of 17,661 battle-related deaths compared to the Soviet war affected the GDP per capita by 5.730% growth, and a one-year civil war without the direct involvement of foreign sponsors is predicted to lower the GDP per capita by 4.126%⁶. The result from Model 1 suggests that both the direct involvement of the USSR and the US in the Afghan war resulted in a temporary increase in the per capita earnings, and the civil war had a reverse effect on it, which is consistent with our *Hypothesis 1 and 2*.

In models 2, 3, and 4, we assess the impact of pro-war indicators—rebellions, external military supports, and population—on per capita income. We include the log form for each in our base model separately. The result from model 2 for the effect of rebellions on GDP per capita is negative but insignificant. It suggests that the existence of rebellions insignificantly reduces Afghan per capita income. The result from Model 3 for the impact of external military support on economic expansion is positive but not significant. It implies that the provision of military aid insignificantly contributes to increasing per capita income. Similarly, the result from Model 4 for the role of population in economic promotion shows that population insignificantly reduces the GDP per capita during wartime. Our research, in models 2–4 which looks at how pro-war variables affected Afghan wartime income, paints a complicated picture. Although it seems that external military aid has a positive impact on per capita income, the statistical evidence is still inconclusive. In a similar vein, uprisings, and population, while theoretically having a detrimental effect, don't have any concrete evidence of doing so, pointing to a complex relationship between conflict and economic prosperity in Afghanistan.

In Figures 2 and 3, we visualized the trend of opium cultivation and foreign aid as two key income resources of the wartime economy. During wartime, both illegal economic activities and foreign aid significantly increased, which indicates that both have a strong link with war and economic survival. In models 5 and 6, we assess the impact of these two wartime economic resources in our base model by considering the log form of both

5 The logarithm of 17,661 battle-related deaths is 9,779 and multiplied by the log coefficient of battle-related death 0.201, the result is 1.965%.

6 The logarithm of 17,661 battle-related deaths is 9,779 and multiplied with the log coefficient of civil war (1992–2021) period 0.422 the result is 4.126, and multiplied with the log of US war is 5.730.

in separate models. Model 5 shows the result of the impact of foreign aid (ODA) on GDP per capita. The result indicates that foreign aid positively and significantly increases per capita income, with a 0.156 coefficient in log form.

In terms of elasticity, a 1% increase in the log of foreign aid, GDP per capita will significantly increase by 0.156% points, which is consistent with our **Hypothesis 3**. Similarly, the result from model 6 for the effect of illegal economic activities on per capita income indicates that GDP per capita is significantly and positively associated with the level of opium cultivation in the country. The result from model 6 for the impact of opium cultivation on GDP per capita with a coefficient of 0.096 in log form shows that a 1% increase in the cultivation of opium in terms of elasticity will increase the GDP per capita by 0.096% points, which is also consistent with our **Hypothesis 4**.

Table 4. The Impact of Armed Conflict on GDP per capita in Afghanistan, 1978–2021: OLS regression

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Battle-related deaths (ln)	0.201 0.041***	0.198 0.040***	0.198 0.040***	0.213 0.058***	0.224 0.056***	0.218 0.040***
USSR war (1978-1991) base						
Civil war (1992-2001)	-0.422 0.102***	-0.466 0.112***	-0.467 0.118***	-0.383 0.257	-0.306 0.240	- -
US war (2002-2021)	0.586 0.092***	0.484 0.131***	0.483 0.157***	0.639 0.395	0.099 0.406	- -
Number of Rebellion Groups (ln)		-0.098 0.093	-0.099 0.096	-0.134 0.136	-0.066 0.129	-0.247 0.123*
Number of External military aid (ln)			0.003 0.189	0.009 0.185	-0.097 0.130	-0.114 0.133
Population (ln)				-0.174 0.410	-0.373 0.376	-0.458 0.374
Official Development Assistance (ln)					0.156 0.035***	0.205 0.032***
Opium cultivation (ln)						0.096 0.050*
Constant	3.656 0.434***	3.852 0.437***	3.845 0.467***	4.17 0.777***	1.930 0.770**	0.281 0.536
Observation	44	44	44	44	44	28
R2	0.843	0.847	0.847	0.848	0.905	0.943

Source. Author calculation. Dependent variable GDP per capita and all independent variables are considered with their natural logarithm forms to treat non-linearity, heteroscedasticity, and serial autocorrelation. In addition, all models incorporate robust errors. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

6. Estimating the Economic Cost of Armed Conflict, 2002–2021

Researchers have developed a number of different methods to estimate the economic costs of war. For example, Arunatilake *et al.*, (2001) split the expenses into direct and indirect categories in their case study of Sri Lanka's economic cost of war using interest rates on data collected from the Central Bank's annual report. In a similar vein, Abandie and Gardeazabal (2003) estimated the economic cost of terrorism by constructing a synthetic territory devoid of terrorism and comparing its economic performance to that of the real Basque region. Moreover, Fitzgerald (1987) used comparative analysis to examine Nicaragua's economic costs of war, contrasting the real economic performance of the nation with the forecasts provided by the previous administration. A cross-sectional study by Stewart *et al.*, (2000) estimated the economic impact of warfare by comparing the average growth of various regions.

Yet, the Afghan people's financial losses from the war have not been as well measured. A few studies attempted to discover the impact of the conflict on the economy of Afghanistan. For example, Barrett (2018) argues that due to the conflict, the Afghan central government between 2005 and 2017 lost about \$3 billion in revenue. Another study investigates the relationship between conflict and household well-being in war-affected areas, highlighting that household expenditure increased in the presence of international troops (Floreani *et al.*, 2021). Interestingly, another study argues that the association between violent conflict in Afghanistan and households participation in private economic activities is positive (Ciarli, Kofol, & Menon, 2015). In a similar pattern, Bove and Gavrilova (2014) attempt to investigate the impact of conflict on food prices. Notably, a qualitative survey examines the individual experiences of civilians during the armed conflict (Jackson, 2009). The survey results show that 43% of respondents reported property destruction, 25% had land destroyed, and 34% had experienced robbery. Additionally, 76% were forced to flee their homes due to the conflict, and 70% reported experiencing unemployment. These findings underscore the devastating impact of war on civilian populations, not only in terms of physical destruction and displacement but also in terms of economic hardship and loss of livelihood. However, all these works do not reflect the countrywide impact of war and conflict on the economy.

To quantify the economic costs of war, we employ national budget drafts. Table 5 presents the total national budget of Afghanistan for the period of 2002–2022. The total national core budget over the past two decades has been reported at over \$91.8 billion (see Table 5). 37% financing through domestic revenue, 57% foreign aid, and a 6% budget deficit. Furthermore, 60% of the national core budget is allocated to operational activities and only 40% to development programs. The result from Table 5 suggests that the Afghan national budget was heavily reliant on foreign aid with little consideration for development programs.

Table 5. Total national budget of Afghanistan (in million US\$), 2002–2022

Year*		National Core Budget	Financing Sources			Expenditure Type	
			Domestic Revenue	Foreign Aid	Budget Deficit	Operating	Development
2002–03 ^φ	1381	1,803.80	100.90	1,152.00	550.90	n/a	n/a
2003–04 ^φ	1382	2,268.00	208.10	1,817.90	242.00	n/a	n/a
2004–05	1383	1,378.60	308.60	628.40	441.60	608.60	770.00
2005–06	1384	1,884.40	333.00	1,059.60	491.80	678.00	1,209.00
2006–06	1385	2,204.56	520.00	1,684.56	n/a	831.80	1,372.76
2007–08	1386	2,612.16	715.46	1,594.36	302.34	459.39	2,152.77
2008–09	1387	2,695.35	887.50	1,737.85	70.00	1,307.19	1,388.16
2009–10	1388	2,942.53	973.08	1,541.61	427.84	1,806.80	1,135.73
2010–11	1389	4,443.21	1,466.39	2,862.85	113.97	2,397.24	2,045.97
2011–12	1390	4,593.64	2,028.22	2,455.64	109.77	3,192.31	1,401.32
2012–13	1391	4,894.88	1,900.28	2,740.07	254.53	2,673.81	2,221.07
2013–14	1392	7,042.99	2,598.41	4,200.78	243.79	3,773.22	3,269.76
2014–15	1393	7,649.62	2,489.95	4,787.36	372.31	5,008.44	2,641.18
2015–16	1394	7,652.16	2,201.98	5,311.46	138.72	4,973.44	2,678.72
2016–17	1395	6,635.92	1,992.14	4,494.22	149.56	4,120.20	2,515.72
2017–18	1396	6,409.16	2,396.44	3,862.73	150.00	4,006.15	2,403.01
2018–19	1397	5,280.83	2,364.97	2,747.86	168.00	3,909.16	1,371.67
2019–20	1398	5,368.52	2,737.95	2,502.93	127.64	3,704.28	1,664.24
2020–21	1399	5,563.37	2,705.37	2,705.37	152.63	3,727.46	1,835.91
2021–22	1400	5,878.45	2,811.69	2,660.76	406.00	3,841.69	2,036.76
2022–23 ^μ	1401	2,650.00	2,150.00	0	500.00	n/a	n/a
Grand Total		91,852.13	33,890.42	52,548.30	5,413.40	51,2019.17	34,113.74
Percentage		1.00	0.37	0.57	0.06	0.6	0.4

Source: Author calculation. Value has been given by \$US million. The exchange rate for each year has been provided in the budget draft.

* The local calendar is the Hijri calendar (1381), which starts from 21 March.

φ the data for the years 2002 and 2003 is extracted from the Asian Development Bank's report (ADB, 2003).

μ the data for the year 2022 is employed from the Voice of America News Chanel (Gul, 2022).

For the remaining years, the official website of the Ministry of Finance of Afghanistan and print copies of the National Budget Draft report have been utilized (Ministry of Finance, 2023)

Next, we split government spending into related and unrelated categories for the war in Table 6. We did not include the 2022–2023 budget in further analysis due to a lack of full information. The security sector is deemed to be either directly or indirectly associated with war, based on the national budget draft⁷. We also analyze the budget of

7 The security sector includes the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Interior Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Intelligence Service, and the President's protection funds.

Table 6. Gross war-related and war-affected budget (in Million US\$), 2002-2021

Year*	National Core		War-related and war-affected institutions							Unallocated budget codes†	Other institutions
	Budget	Security ⁿ	Narcotic	Rural Rehabilitation	Education	Health	Martyries and disabled	Refugees and IDs			
2002-03*	1,803.80	583.92	5.32	116.04	237.44	76.70	5.00	4.74	117.26	608.60	
2003-04*	2,268.00	734.19	6.69	145.90	298.55	96.44	6.30	5.96	147.44	765.22	
2004-05	1,378.60	390.10	12.30	78.30	277.00	22.40	12.67	82.50	106.20	130.13	
2005-06	1,884.40	358.50	23.50	254.90	230.34	58.70	13.52	3.90	116.20	824.84	
2006-06	2,204.56	412.47	31.50	250.70	298.86	105.55	23.45	6.15	107.50	968.38	
2007-08	2,612.16	464.00	10.80	354.99	350.77	134.11	41.70	3.80	238.68	1,013.31	
2008-09	2,695.35	632.60	15.37	357.26	498.30	143.85	40.10	3.30	205.00	799.57	
2009-10	2,942.53	770.32	12.45	233.52	663.94	137.91	25.89	7.80	422.39	668.31	
2010-11	4,443.21	875.10	9.94	426.35	651.46	180.82	32.54	9.40	777.20	1,480.40	
2011-12	4,593.64	1,852.62	6.10	281.54	744.80	200.96	30.15	6.92	360.78	1,109.77	
2012-13	4,894.88	1,562.71	12.92	365.77	664.68	227.42	35.60	5.84	440.17	1,579.77	
2013-14	7,042.99	2,790.67	21.51	482.77	1,062.62	267.88	40.11	7.73	582.47	1,787.23	
2014-15	7,649.62	3,375.70	19.02	415.08	987.01	328.36	394.33	7.65	373.60	1,748.87	
2015-16	7,652.16	3,371.16	28.35	533.83	986.57	324.58	348.23	6.34	162.14	1,890.96	
2016-17	6,635.92	2,644.13	28.53	252.44	784.43	316.95	320.00	10.53	232.86	2,046.05	
2017-18	6,409.16	2,204.12	25.09	274.41	840.68	215.04	365.47	13.09	498.67	1,972.59	
2018-19	5,280.83	1,902.02	12.50	286.68	658.76	201.75	353.40	12.85	430.26	1,422.61	
2019-20	5,368.52	1,933.65	5.60	262.51	628.26	230.93	119.23	14.65	242.76	1,930.93	
2020-21	5,563.37	1,905.74	-	328.23	691.23	188.34	209.87	15.09	281.72	1,943.15	
2021-22	5,878.45	1,430.65	-	299.00	722.40	240.34	265.76	17.06	220.23	2,683.01	
Grand Total	89,202.13	30,194.37	287.49	6,000.21	12,278.10	3,698.02	2,683.32	245.31	6,063.53	27,483.77	
Percentage	1.000	0.338	0.003	0.067	0.138	0.044	0.030	0.003	0.068	0.308	

Source: Author calculation. The value has been given as \$US million. The exchange rate for each year has been provided in the budget draft.

* The local calendar is the Hijri calendar, which starts on March 21.

† The data for the years 2002 and 2003 is extracted from the Asian Development Bank's report (only national budget value) (ADB, 2003). For the remaining years, the official website of the Ministry of Finance of Afghanistan and print copies of the National Budget Draft report have been utilized (Ministry of Finance, 2023).

n Security includes the budget share of the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Interior Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the General Directorate of National Security, and the President's protective service fund.

t Unallocated budget codes include pensions for martyrs and disabled, pensions for civil and military servants, contingency funds for military and defense, policy reserves, contingency funds for ministry and interior, and several others, some of which are directly related to war.

the Ministry of Narcotics, the Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled, the Ministry of Refugees and Internally Displaced, the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation, and several unallocated budget codes as war-affected institutions. Table 6 shows that throughout the past years (2002–2021), 69.2% of the national budget was spent on sectors associated with and impacted by war, whereas 30.8% went to non-war-related institutions.

In Table 7, we estimate further the net war-related budget considering Table 6. The total allocated budget for the security sector in Table 6 may not be all related to war. For example, in the budget of 2007–2008, at least \$464 million (17.7% of the national budget) was allocated to the security sector (see Table 6). According to the 2007–2008 budget draft, we calculated that \$221 million (47%) of the security sector budget was allocated for defense, \$178 million (38%) for the Ministry of Interior, \$41 million (8.8%) for the ministry of foreign affairs, \$7 million (1.5%) for president production, and \$18 million (3.8%) for the general directorate of national security⁸. In another example, in the national budget of 2014–2015, the total amount of the security sector was estimated at \$3,375.70 million (44.13% of the total national core budget). According to the budget draft, 55.64% was for defense, 35.43% for the Ministry of Interior, 5.9% for intelligence, and the remaining foreign minister and president's protection funds were distributed. On average, 88.8% of 2007's and 96.97% of 2014's security budgets were spent by three main security organizations (defense, interior, and intelligence). In conclusion, at least 92.88% of both years have been spent in three main, directly security-related ministries. We targeted the average of these two years (92.88%) in budget adjustments for the security sector in Table 7. Put another way, when estimating the net cost for the security sector in the subsequent step of Table 7, 92.88% of the security budget from Table 6 for all years is seen to be directly related to the war.

Furthermore, the budget of the Ministry of Narcotics, martyrs and disabled, refugees, and IDs are totally considered war-affected institutions in our net war cost estimation in Table 7. Due to the prolonged war, schools, roads, bridges, hospitals, and other public infrastructure have been completely or partially destroyed. Therefore, we assume that at least 45% of the budget of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation, education, and the Health Sector may be costed in war-affected projects. Similarly, as shown in Table 6, at least 6.8% of the total budget has been allocated to several unallocated budget codes. Unallocated budget codes include pensions for martyrs and disabled, pensions for civil and military servants, contingency funds for military and defense, policy reserves, contingency funds for the Ministry of Interior, and several others, some of which are directly related to war. We assume that at least 55% of this amount has been spent

8 The 2007 national budget draft. See <https://www.mof.gov.af/dr/%D8%B3%D9%86%D8%AF%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%AF%D8%AC%D9%87>.

Table 7. Net estimation of the war-related budget of Afghanistan (in Billion US\$), 2002–2021 with a $\pm 5\%$ error

Year	(1) GDP, Total	(2) National core budget	(3) Security budget**	(4) War-affected sector budget**	3+4 = 5 Total war-related budget	5/2 Total war-related budget/ national budget ratio	5/1 Total war-related budget/ GDP ratio	2/1 National budget/ GDP ratio
2002–03 ^φ	3.854	1.804	0.426	0.287	0.712	0.395	0.18	0.468
2003–04 ^φ	4.539	2.268	0.529	0.354	0.883	0.389	0.19	0.500
2004–05	5.221	1.379	0.683	0.347	1.030	0.744	0.22	0.264
2005–06	6.226	1.884	0.541	0.362	0.903	0.479	0.15	0.303
2006–06	6.971	2.205	0.639	0.420	1.059	0.481	0.15	0.316
2007–08	9.716	2.612	0.852	0.582	1.434	0.549	0.15	0.269
2008–09	10.250	2.695	0.962	0.632	1.594	0.591	0.16	0.263
2009–10	12.155	2.943	1.092	0.772	1.863	0.633	0.15	0.242
2010–11	15.634	4.443	1.449	1.086	2.535	0.571	0.16	0.284
2011–12	18.190	4.594	1.207	0.813	2.020	0.440	0.11	0.253
2012–13	20.204	4.895	1.284	0.888	2.172	0.444	0.11	0.242
2013–14	20.564	7.043	1.815	1.238	3.053	0.433	0.15	0.342
2014–15	20.551	7.650	1.997	1.429	3.427	0.448	0.17	0.372
2015–16	19.998	7.652	1.942	1.312	3.254	0.425	0.16	0.383
2016–17	18.020	6.636	1.561	1.110	2.671	0.402	0.15	0.368
2017–18	18.896	6.409	1.719	1.304	3.023	0.472	0.16	0.339
2018–19	18.419	5.281	1.514	1.156	2.670	0.506	0.14	0.287
2019–20	18.905	5.369	1.160	0.792	1.952	0.364	0.10	0.284
2020–21	20.143	5.563	1.334	0.940	2.274	0.409	0.11	0.276
2021–22	14.583	5.878	1.408	0.988	2.397	0.408	0.16	0.403
Total	283.039	89.202	24.113	16.813	40.926	0.459	0.15	0.315

Source: Author calculation: The value has been given as \$US billion. The exchange rate for each year has been provided in the budget draft.

^φ the data for the years 2002 and 2003 is extracted from the Asian Development Bank's report (only national budget value) (ADB, 2003). For the remaining years, the official website of the Ministry of Finance of Afghanistan and print copies of the National Budget Draft report have been utilized (Ministry of Finance, 2023). For the GDP the WDI dataset of the World Bank has been employed (World Bank, 2023).

* 92.88% of security budget from Table 6 is considered as directly related to war projects.

** Total budget of three ministries (Narcotics, Martyries and Disabled, and Refugees and IDs), 45% of the budget of the ministry of (rural rehabilitation, education, and the health sector), and 55% of the unallocated budget codes from Table 6, and the interest rate of the budget deficit from Table 5, with 1.41% is considered as war-affected costs.

on war-related projects. Moreover, the Afghan national core budget, at least 6% (\$5.4 billion), has seen a budget deficit (see Table 5). Loans with varying interest rates were the primary means by which the Afghan government paid for this shortfall. For instance, the World Bank's debt service in 2004 was 0.75, the Asian Development Bank's debt service was 1%, and the Saudi Trust's debt service was 2.5, according to the draft budget for 2004–2005 (ADB, 2003). In comparison, the market rate for the year was 5%. We compute the cost of borrowing using the 1.41% average rate across three firms.

Table 7, focusing on the recent two decades (2002–2021), estimates the net war-related budget. The result indicates that at least \$24 billion directly related to war costs and around \$16.9 billion for directly war-affected institutions have been allocated. In total, at least \$40.9 billion (45.9%) of the national budget (\$283 billion) is allocated to war-related projects. The total war-related budget/total GDP ratio has reached 0.15. It implies that the war budget covers 15% of the total economy. Similarly, the national budget/total GDP ratio was calculated at 0.315. It explains that the national core budget over the course of the US presence was 31.5% of the total GDP (see Table 7). In conclusion, due to the estimation with a 95% significance interval, the whole budget for war-related expenses between 2002 and 2021 was predicted to be \$40.9 billion. Our estimate shows that the Afghan government's expenditure during the US presence on war-related sectors was roughly 10.6 times higher than the GDP of 2002 (\$3.854 billion) and 2.8 times higher than the GDP of 2021 (\$14.583 billion).

7. Conclusion

Afghanistan a war-torn nation since the installation of a Soviet-backed government in 1978 suffered from ongoing conflicts that claimed nearly a million lives and forced 5.6 million people to flee to neighboring and Western countries. Moreover, 4.3 million internally displaced people, 2 million widows, 1.5 million disabled people, and 97% of the population live in poverty (see Table 3). These statistics indicate the stark human cost of war for Afghan civilians. Despite this, during both the American and Soviet periods, the nation received billions of dollars in both military and development support. The economic costs of war in Afghanistan for foreign nations have been significantly quantified. For example, the economic cost of war in Afghanistan for the USSR was roughly estimated at over \$48 billion during 1980–1986 (CIA, 2000), and for the US taxpayer (2001–2022), over \$2.3 trillion (Watson Institute, 2022). Yet, the economic costs of armed conflict for Afghan people have been addressed in the literature, which this study tried to cover. In our first approach, using UCDP and WDI datasets and OLS regression, we examine the impact of conflict on Afghan per capita income, 1978–2021. In our second approach, analyzing the National State Budget Draft, we quantify the economic cost of armed conflict for Afghan people, 2002–2021.

We separate the 45-year-long ongoing Afghan conflict into two categories: civil war and foreign military invasion war. We contend that a conflict with foreign support may have

a different economic impact than one that is domestic. The conqueror may provide the occupied country with both military and economic support in order for it to survive. In our second approach to assessing the economic cost of war for Afghan people, we focus on war-related and war-affected government budgets. In the literature, there is no generally accepted method for calculating the economic cost of war for a nation. By separating war-related government expenses from non-war-related ones, we estimated the net economic costs of war for Afghanistan.

We found that the one-year armed conflict in Afghanistan between 1978 and 2021, with an average of 17,661 battle-related deaths, significantly increased the Afghan GDP per capita by at least 1.9%. Furthermore, a one-year US-led armed conflict, relative to a USSR-led war, increases Afghan per capita income by at least 5.7%, and a one-year civil war decreases by 4.1%. In addition, the results suggest that the wartime Afghan per capita GDP was significantly associated with foreign aid and opium cultivation. Our findings point out that a foreign military invasion, in comparison to a civil war, has a significant and positive temporary effect on the local economy's expansion. Which follows the literature in the field such as Koubi, (2005), Olson (1982), Herbst (1990), and Murdoch & Sandler (2004) suggests there is a positive association between war and economic dynamics. Furthermore, our estimation of the economic costs of war shows that between 2002 and 2021, the national core budget for Afghanistan was over \$89 billion, with roughly $\$40.9 \pm 5\%$ billion (45.9%) allocated to war-related and war-affected contexts. Our estimation also illustrates that the total economy between 2002 and 2021 is predicted to be \$283 billion (see Table 7). We found that almost 15% of the total economy has been devoted to war-related expenses. In other words, the 20-year war-related budget (\$40.9 billion) is equal to 10.6 times (1,062%) of 2002's and 2.8 times (280%) of 2021's total GDP in Afghanistan.

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Mali: Conflict, Social Order and the Crime-Terror Nexus

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Abstract: This article examines the relationship between conflict, social order, and the crime-terror nexus, with a focus on non-state armed groups in Mali, particularly Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM). Using anarchist political theory, the study challenges the view of these groups as purely chaotic, instead suggesting their primary aim is to establish social order. The crime-terror nexus is explored to understand its role in new governance structures created by these groups. The study underscores the importance of re-evaluating the frameworks used to interpret armed groups, emphasizing their role in creating social order and stability in conflict zones. The research offers insights into the complex dynamics of armed groups in Mali and encourages further investigation into their influence on regional stability.

Keywords: Mali, armed groups, social order, terrorism, governance, conflict, crime-terror nexus.

Introduction

Despite its natural, greater propensity for engaging directly with the theoretical topic of non-state armed groups, the field of conflict studies suffered from tendencies that are usually more visible in political science and international relations: to view most problems through the eyes of the state. Some scholars may still argue that one goal of the social scientist is to provide meaningful interpretation and suggestions for governmental or intergovernmental intervention toward ensuring the peace, security, and stability of a conflict-ravaged region.

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This article departs from this perspective, arguing instead that providing meaningful interpretations of social phenomena and processes should be the proper focus of social investigation. In its theoretical leanings, the perspective from which social processes are analyzed here owes much to the anarchist political literature of the last decades. This literature has delineated clear separations between a state perspective on social and political processes and one that takes into account other, competing social actors. It has been argued that in many societies, past and present, non-state actors have created parallel, overlapping, or alternative social orders, be they territorial or not, some of them more stable and successful than those created by central governments (Perlman, 1983; Scott, 2009; Gelderloos, 2017; Graeber & Wengrow, 2021). Even more radically and in a clear departure from Weberian social science, it argues that the legitimacy of such groups and the social orders they create is real and can be a serious competitor to the legitimacy claimed by central governments.

This is the perspective that one seeks to bring to the study of conflict, armed groups, and social order in Saharan and Sahelian Africa, particularly in the case of Mali. Essentially, this article portrays how certain particular Malian non-state armed groups have created order through conflict, by using violent approaches to governmental authorities, foreign interventionist forces as well as restive civilian populations. These forms of social order, sometimes supported by what governments call criminal activity, are not only stable but can be expanded on a greater scale (Stoddard, 2023). In recent years, Malian armed groups have sought, with varying degrees of success, to export their particular brands of political and social order to the neighboring countries (Rupesinghe *et al.*, 2021). One particular success of their approach is visible in the tectonic changes in the governments of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, which have all undergone coups since the beginning of the 2020s. These internal political changes have resulted in changes in the international orientation of these countries, with French and US influence being rapidly replaced by a significant Russian security presence, first under the aegis of the Wagner Group and later the Africa Corps (AFP, 2023a).

This should be seen as a theoretical study, resting mainly on academic literature, as well as on some video documentaries and video evidence from the area and on raw information coming from news agencies. However, it should not be considered a proper, historical, or anthropological study of Malian armed groups, for the completion of which both field trips and a knowledge of local languages would be necessary. Therefore, the study remains mostly an intellectual exercise, with all its inherent limitations. The structure of the study involves first a political, social, and historical incursion into the roots of the post-2012 crisis involving Mali, proceeding towards a more in-depth discussion of the linkages between conflict, armed groups, and social order in that area, seen from the perspectives of recent research on non-state armed groups, as well as anchoring of the conversation in the crime-terror nexus perspectives that have shaped so much of the contemporary conversation on these topics.

Historical Processes

Like all its neighbors, Mali is the product of conflicting imperialisms in the Saharan and Sahelian regions of Africa, roughly circumscribing the last two decades of the 19th century. Kicking out Ottoman influences and resurgent diplomacy in the area (Minawi, 2016) and managing to secure a diplomatic agreement with Britain that kept London out of the Lake Chad basin while keeping Paris away from the Upper Nile, France built at the beginning of the 1900s a vast colonial empire in the region (Porch, 2005). In truth, direct French political control over these regions was rather short in historical terms, barely encompassing two generations. An officer such as Octave Meynier, who had military command roles in the conquest of present-day Mali, Niger, and Chad back in 1899 was still alive in 1960 when these states gained their independence. However, French influence was decisive, for instance by dismantling the traditional political structure of these territories, prevalent since at least the 13th and 14th centuries. For all this time if not longer, the lands between the upper Niger and Lake Chad had been organized in local kingdoms and empires, independent for many centuries, and now and then submitted to foreign authority such as the sultan of Morocco (Gomez, 2018). At the same time, Saharan trade routes, linking West and Central African commerce to the markets of the Maghreb, and further under the control of the Tuareg.

A mostly lighter-skinned population of ancient origins, the Tuareg had never built state-like structures but could boast enough military force and local acumen that few dared to contest their control over central Saharan lands. While rejecting a state-like structure for their governance (as well as, in a substantial way, the patriarchal model so prevalent in most other Muslim societies), they were nevertheless a highly stratified society with clear caste barriers, as well as embracing, in many cases, a racialized perspective on social relations, mainly through the possession and exploitation of black slaves, a practice that has continued throughout the colonial and post-colonial period (Disappearing world, 1970).

Colonization put an end to these structures, though social processes and racial imaginations are harder to shatter than political institutions are. French colonialists preferred to base their power on settled, black populations from the south of the country, upending the traditional military dominance of the camel-mounted, often nomad Tuareg (Garnier, 2018). The post-independence period however marked a longer-term but clearer departure from traditional structures of political power and social practices. The central governments in Bamako, led by black elites from the south of the country, despite infighting and a succession of coups, remained loyal to the *Françafrique*, the Paris-built pattern of domination of former Western and Central African colonies based on military pacts, frequent interventions as well as economic dominance through the mechanism of the Banque de France controlled CFA (Borrel *et al.*, 2021). More importantly though and much like in the rest of the decolonized world, Bamako remained

dedicated to the project of building a modern national-state modeled on the European example. This meant a thorough process of crushing traditional power structures, social mores, and local justice customs. It also implied a conscious and relatively sustained policy of sedentarizing the local nomad populations, of which the most important are the Tuareg of the northern and eastern regions and the black Fulani living closer to the Niger (Go Wild, 2023).

These pressures, depressed the Tuareg of their traditional mode of living (much like in neighboring Algeria and Niger, for instance), challenging their control over Malian Saharan routes, upending their social structures through the emancipation of their black Bella servants/slaves as well as depriving them for a stake in governing the country created the perfect local context for the multiple rebellions waged by this population (Jubber, 2016; Baldaro, 2018). Since independence, no less than four times have the Tuareg contested the authority of the Malian government by force of arms.

Leading directly to the present-day conflict, which began in 2012, is the Arab Spring and particularly the collapse of the North African security framework brought by the Libyan civil war and the botched Western intervention of 2011. Substantial numbers of Tuareg men, former mercenaries in the forces of the slain Colonel Gaddafi now without an employer, returned home to their communities in Niger and Mali, carrying them the weapons that served them through the initial phases of the civil war (Java Discover, 2023b). They returned to find that not much had changed in the relations between their communities and the central government, as pledges of autonomy made after previous rebellions had been ignored and leaders marginalized. But they also returned to an ideologically and economically changed social framework. Continuous infiltration from southern Algeria of Salafi jihadists and preachers had radicalized many youths in the area, who were now willing to seek a better future as soldiers in the ranks of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (Ammour, 2013; Roetman *et al.*, 2019). Simultaneously, a shift in the main routes used by drug smugglers to get their merchandise from Latin American production grounds to South European market hubs privileging land routes from West African to south Mediterranean ports had offered a new way of making serious profit through the centuries-old mastery of the commercial routes crisscrossing the Sahara desert (Rizk, 2021; Raineri, 2022b).

These conditions aided the ignition of conflict in Mali in 2012. Tuareg nationalists wishing, for the first time in their long history, the establishment of a separate state in the northeast of Mali (Azawad), joined forces with jihadists mostly led and recruited within their own community (and later from among the Fulani of the south). The success in taking over all of Mali from the Algerian border to the bend of the Niger created the conditions for the jihadists to become more assertive, eventually pushing the nationalist groups to the wayside (Investigations et Enquêtes, 2023). The newly dominant jihadists were confronted by a weak Malian government, boosted in 2013

by the forces of the former colonial power France who was in turn replaced, since the series of military coups that rocked Bamako in the early 2020s, by Russia through its Wagner proxies (McAllister, 2023).

By the mid-2020s, the central Malian government and its new allies were confronting a substantial array of armed groups controlling substantial regions of the country and threatening major cities (Raineri, 2022a). No longer confined to the traditional Tuareg territories north of the Niger River, these armed groups projected power in the south of the country but also in the east, across, the border with Niger and south, provoking instability and vicious repression from the military junta-led government in Burkina Faso (Afriyie, 2019). But while war ravaged the country, these armed groups, often in conflict with each other—sometimes on ideological, other times on ethnic lines—have produced alternative social orders in controlled territories, delivering security, public goods, governance as well as their own pattern of justice to territories and people they ruled. In this, they have proven solid competitors to a central government unable to provide security in troubled times and disappointing in providing good governance in previous, less violent eras (Java Discover, 2023a).

Understanding Armed Groups and the Creation of Social Order at Times of Internal Conflict

Sub-Saharan Africa has been a theater of persistent conflict and instability for decades now, largely driven by the actions of non-state armed groups (Amghar, 2015). These groups, varying in their motivations, structures, and affiliations, have profoundly impacted social order in the regions they operate. This segment examines the connection between African non-state armed groups and social order within the context of ongoing conflicts, with a particular focus on the Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) in Mali. The analysis draws from multiple sources to provide an understanding of how these groups create, shape, influence, and sometimes undermine social order in sub-Saharan Africa.

Understanding the role of non-state armed groups in social order requires a multifaceted theoretical approach. This review employs a combination of political theory, political ecology, governance, and conflict theory to frame the analysis. Political ecology helps understand the interaction between political, economic, and environmental factors that drive conflicts and the emergence of non-state armed groups (Benjaminsen & Ba, 2019). Governance theory provides insights into how these groups establish control and legitimacy in areas where state presence is weak or absent (Sandor & Campana, 2019). Conflict theory explains the dynamics of violence and the conditions under which non-state actors thrive (Bøås & Torheim, 2013).

Working from a perspective informed by anarchist political theory, we previously argued (Miroiu, 2019) that AGs are foundational to the creation and sustenance of social

order, arguing against the traditional view that sees states as the primary actors in this process. One can introduce a comprehensive classification of AGs, distinguishing between permanent and impermanent groups, and further categorize them based on their motivations as either political-ideological or economic-exploitative. This classification underscores the diverse nature of AGs and their varying impacts on social order.

Central to this argument is the assertion that AGs operate at a fundamental level of social order, preceding even the state itself. The perspective suggests that the emergence of states and structured societies often results from the actions and organization of AGs (Miroiu & Ungureanu, 2015). This perspective challenges the orthodox view that the state is the ultimate guarantor of social order, instead positing that AGs can create, enforce, and contest social norms and hierarchies. Such argument delves into the historical roots of AGs, tracing their evolution from early human communities to contemporary state and non-state formations. This literature argues that AGs have always been integral to the establishment of order, whether through the defense of community boundaries or the imposition of internal governance. Historical analysis further reinforces the centrality of AGs in shaping political and social landscapes. This perspective also critically examines the relationship between AGs and the state, challenging the binary distinction between state and non-state actors. It highlights how AGs can function both within and outside the state framework, serving similar purposes of order creation and maintenance (Miroiu, 2020). This nuanced approach encourages a reevaluation of how we understand political authority and governance.

Non-state armed groups in sub-Saharan Africa have diverse origins, often rooted in historical grievances, ethnic tensions, and socio-economic disparities. The collapse of state structures, as seen in Mali, has provided fertile ground for these groups to emerge and gain control (Hassan, 2019). The Arab Spring and the fall of Libya's regime significantly influenced the rise of such groups by destabilizing the region and providing access to arms and combatants (Issaev *et al.*, 2021). The return of armed Tuaregs from Libya to Mali catalyzed the formation of groups like the Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNL), which later fragmented, giving rise to jihadist factions (Desgrais *et al.*, 2018).

Non-state armed groups in Africa often fill the governance vacuum left by weak or absent state institutions. In Mali, groups like JNIM have established themselves as alternative governance actors, leveraging local grievances and providing services that the state fails to deliver. According to Sandor and Campana (2019), these groups mediate disputes, enforce justice, and offer security, thereby gaining legitimacy among local populations. This dual strategy of violence and governance helps them maintain control and expand their influence (Baldaro & Diall, 2020).

The ability of these groups to adapt and integrate into local social structures is crucial. Jihadist groups in Mali, for instance, have forged ties with various communities, presenting themselves as protectors and arbiters in conflicts over resources (Benjaminsen

& Ba, 2019). Their involvement in local governance is not just coercive but also includes negotiation and cooperation with local leaders, making their presence more acceptable and sometimes preferred over the state's corrupt and inefficient administration (Bøås & Torheim, 2013).

JNIM in Mali

JNIM, formed in 2017 from the merger of several jihadist groups, exemplifies the complex role of non-state armed groups in social order. JNIM has strategically positioned itself as a governance entity in parts of Mali, combining militant operations with efforts to provide basic services and enforce Sharia law. This dual approach helps JNIM to sustain its operations and garner local support (Roetman *et al.*, 2019).

The group's leadership, particularly figures like Iyad Ag Ghaly, have utilized historical grievances and local conflicts to strengthen their position. Iyad ad Ghaly's career encompasses such different roles as a veteran of the Tuareg rebellion of the 1990s, a negotiator with the Bamako government in the name of his people (he belongs to the noble caste of the Ifogha branch of the Tuareg), a diplomat serving in Saudi Arabia and now a radicalized Salafi jihadist highlights the complexities of these grievances and conflicts. His selection as leader underscores the importance of personal histories for understanding the dynamics of non-state armed groups (Hassel, 1977; Cunningham & Sawyer, 2019). Under his command, JNIM's integration into local governance involves both coercive and cooperative strategies, allowing the jihadis to influence local power dynamics and resource distribution (Ladini, 2023). Their ability to adapt and reconfigure their strategies in response to military pressures underscores their resilience and the challenges they pose to state authority (Sandor & Campana, 2019).

The role of non-state armed groups in sub-Saharan Africa is deeply intertwined with ethnic and social dynamics. In Mali, the Fulani community's involvement in jihadist activities highlights the ethnic dimensions of the conflict (Cline, 2023). Groups like Katiba Macina, part of JNIM, have capitalized on Fulani grievances against the state and other ethnic groups, using these tensions to recruit and mobilize support. The manipulation of ethnic identities and historical grievances is a common tactic among these groups to legitimize their actions and gain local backing (Diallo, 2017). These developments parallel similar conflict dynamics in other former French colonies such as the Central African Republic, where the Christian-Muslim conflict overlaps ethnic divides (Kah, 2013; Alecu & Miroiu, 2021).

The economic motivations of non-state armed groups are also significant. Many of these groups engage in criminal activities, including kidnapping for ransom, drug trafficking, and smuggling, to finance their operations (De Danieli, 2014). This blend of ideological and economic objectives complicates efforts to counter these groups, as they have diverse revenue streams and local economic ties (Chelin, 2020). In Mali,

JNIM's involvement in criminal enterprises highlights the hybrid nature of such groups. Their control over smuggling routes and engagement in illicit trade not only funds their operations but also integrates them into local economic networks, further entrenching their influence (Ammour, 2013). The relationships between terrorism and organized crime are intricate, with groups like JNIM engaging in both ideological and financially motivated activities, often blurring the lines between the two (Hutchinson & O'Malley, 2007; Wang, 2010; Dishman, 2005).

International interventions in sub-Saharan Africa have had mixed results. In Mali, the French-led Operation Barkhane and other international efforts have managed to reclaim key territories but have not fully addressed the underlying issues driving the conflict. The resilience of groups like JNIM and their ability to adapt to military pressures indicate the limitations of purely military solutions (Baldaro & Diall, 2020). Recent abilities to take over military bases and strike deep into the south of Mali and northern Burkina Faso underscore the solidity of jihadist groups such as JNIM or its rival, the Islamic State-Sahel Province (VOA Africa, 2023). Mounted on motorbikes, which are very hard to hit by attack drones due to their small size and high speed, and able to swarm military bases from multiple directions, the jihadists are more than a match for governmental armed forces (Zimmerer, 2019; RFI, 2024).

The involvement of private military companies and foreign armed forces, as seen in Mali, Niger, and the Central African Republic, adds another layer of complexity (AFP, 2023b). These actors often pursue their own interests, sometimes aligning with local factions, which can exacerbate conflicts and undermine state sovereignty (Amoah, 2023). The strategic use of counterterrorism assemblages, involving international and local stakeholders, has shown both successes and limitations in addressing the root causes of jihadism in the region (Baldaro & D'Amato, 2023). So far, this governmental approach has at most provided security for certain areas, usually of interest for Western powers or Russia (such as gold or uranium mines), but has done little to pacify the country or to provide public services that could induce the population to support the government more than they support the non-state armed groups.

The influence of non-state armed groups on social order in sub-Saharan Africa is profound and multifaceted. These groups thrive in environments of weak state presence, leveraging local grievances, ethnic tensions, and economic opportunities to establish themselves as alternative governance actors (Hernann, 2016). The case of JNIM in Mali illustrates how such groups can integrate into local social and political structures, providing both challenges and limited forms of stability in conflict-ridden regions. Addressing the role of non-state armed groups in sub-Saharan Africa requires a comprehensive approach that goes beyond military intervention to include governance reforms, economic development, and the resolution of local grievances. How jihadist governance manifests itself on the ground is a harder nut to crack, as the evidence comes mostly

from refugees from conflict zones, as well as from other opponents of radical Islamists (Elischer, 2019). Comparative work with governance patterns of the Islamic State in Syria and the Taliban in Afghanistan could be useful in a larger study, though the latter, of course, do not have an internationalist dimension.

A Crime-Terror Nexus?

The crime-terror nexus, a complex interplay between organized crime and terrorist groups, has become increasingly significant in global security discussions (Makarenko, 2004; Makarenko, 2021; Hübschle, 2011). This nexus is characterized by the convergence of criminal activities and terrorist tactics, driven by various strategic, financial, and operational imperatives (Clarke & Lee, 2008). The Sahel region, particularly Mali, offers a critical case study for understanding this nexus due to the presence of jihadist groups that engage in both criminal and terrorist activities (Forest, 2022).

The evolution of terrorist financing, especially after the reduction of state sponsorship post-9/11, has pressured terrorist groups to diversify their revenue sources, often leading them into criminal enterprises. Hutchinson and O'Malley (2007) argue that financial necessity has driven terrorist groups to develop "in-house" criminal capabilities, with examples including FARC, the LTTE, and Al Qaeda. This shift has resulted in operational and organizational transformations within these groups, making them resemble traditional criminal organizations in many aspects (Basra & Neumann, 2016). With this, the post-9/11 developments highlighted a connection between the current practices of the jihadist armed groups to those advocated and sometimes put into practice by Latin American and Western European radical left armed groups of the "third wave of terrorism", who similarly pursued "criminal" activities such as bank robberies, kidnappings and extortion (Rapoport, 2019; Marighella, 2021).

In the Sahel, jihadist groups like Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and its contemporary offshoots such as JNIM have exemplified this crime-terror nexus (Pollichieni, 2021). Some authors such as Chelin (2020) explored AQIM's transformation from a purely ideological group into a hybrid entity combining terrorism and organized crime. This transformation has involved engaging in kidnapping for ransom and drug trafficking, which have become significant revenue streams (Aguilera, 2022). AQIM's operations have expanded from Algeria into the broader Sahel region, leveraging local grievances and state weaknesses to establish control and engage in various criminal activities.

Jihadist groups in Mali, such as Ansar Dine and its successor, Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM), illustrate the intersection of terrorism and local governance. Sandor and Campana (2019) highlighted how these groups have rooted themselves in local communities, presenting themselves as alternative governance actors. They exploit inter-communal tensions and provide services and security that the state fails to deliver, thereby gaining legitimacy and support from local populations (Raineri & Strazzari,

2022). This dual approach of violence and governance underscores the complexity of their operations and their ability to adapt to local dynamics.

Similarly, the Fulani ethnic group's increasing involvement in jihadist activities further complicates the crime-terror nexus in the Sahel (Le Monde Afrique, 2019). Cline (2023) notes that groups like Katiba Macina and Ansarul Islam, dominated by Fulani fighters, have capitalized on longstanding grievances and economic conditions to recruit members and conduct operations. This involvement is not solely ideologically driven but also stems from economic as well as ethnic factors, highlighting the multifaceted motivations behind jihadist participation in the region (Boukhars & Kelly, 2022).

The rivalry between different jihadist factions, such as Islamic State-Sahara Province and JNIM, also plays a crucial role in the crime-terror nexus (McAllister, 2022). According to Zenn (2022), the historical and organizational dynamics that have led to the rivalry between these groups include the fact that the Islamic State adheres to a more uncompromising approach to jihad, while JNIM follows a more restrained strategy based on AQIM's principles. This rivalry impacts their operations, recruitment, and local alliances, further complicating the security landscape in the Sahel (Guichaoua & Bouhlef, 2023).

The crime-terror nexus in the Sahel highlights the need for comprehensive strategies that address both terrorism and organized crime. Counter-terrorism efforts must consider the financial and operational interdependencies between these activities. As Hutchinson and O'Malley (2007) and Wang (2010) suggest, understanding the nuanced relationships between criminal and terrorist groups is crucial for understanding local dynamics of economic and social power. This includes understanding their financial networks as well as local grievances, as well as thinking about state or non-state governance structures to reduce the appeal of both criminal and terrorist activities, be they perpetrated by the state or by non-state groups.

Once again, this study needs to be considered in the light of its limitations, particularly regarding the lack of knowledge of Arabic, Tamazigh, or Fula as well as the inability to get unmediated information from the main actors involved, except their communiques which are relayed through traditional or social media. Its conclusions need to be seen as mostly theoretical, perhaps seeking to inspire anthropological-bent scholars who, one day, could make their way to Mali again.

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India: Understanding the Hills-Valley Divide and Meitei-Kuki Conflict in Manipur

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Abstract: This paper explores the notion of the hills-valley divide in Manipur, focusing on the divide between Meitei people and hill tribes and its consequences on ethnic conflict. It examines the hills-valley divide through secondary data such as articles, news reports, and talks. The Meiteis, the largest community, enjoy power in all aspects of life. Due to poor representation in the Legislative Assembly, tribals have a lesser voice in decision-making. Moreover, since funds are allocated by population size, dwellers have a natural advantage over hill people. The existing hills valley divide and development inequality lead to misunderstanding between the tribals and the non-tribals in Manipur. The tribals of Manipur came up with different demands for developing their respective areas and safeguarding their identity. However, their demands were never fulfilled by the Meitei-led Manipur government. The state government tried to change the law to alienate tribal land in a very well-planned manner. This creates inter-ethnic tensions, and tribal political problems have remained unresolved. This paper suggests that the state must formulate policies for Manipur's moral and emotional integration by proportionately diversifying developmental infrastructure.

Keywords: Manipur, hills-valley divide, buffer zone, ethnic clash, violence.

Introduction

Manipur, a state in northeastern India, is known as "The Jewell Land" due to its rich historical legacy. It shares borders with the Indian states of Nagaland to the North, Mizoram to the South, and Assam to the West. It also shares borders with two regions of Myanmar: Sagaing Region to the East and Chin State to the South. The state covers an area of 22,327 square kilometers.

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The fertile alluvial valley, covering 10 percent of the land, extends north-south and is surrounded by hills, covering 90 percent of the land, which form part of the eastern Himalayas. The valley has a population density of 730 persons per square kilometer, while the hills have a density of 61 persons per square kilometer (Kuki Reformation Forum [KReF], 2023).

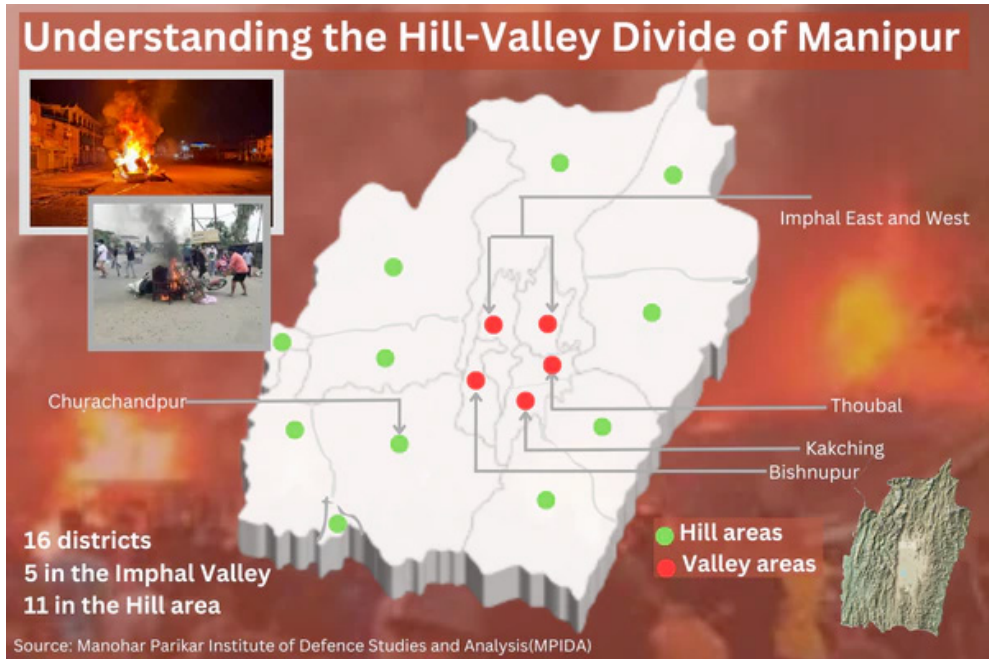


Figure 1. Hills and Valley Districts in Manipur

Source: Manohar Parikar Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis (MPIDA, 2023).

Manipur has three ethnic groups: Meitei, Naga, and Kuki, and a Muslim community called “Pangals” from East Bengal and Mayang from mainland India (Kipgen, 2018). The Meiteis, a non-tribal group, are the largest ethnic community in Manipur, residing primarily in the valley, while tribal groups like Nagas and Kukis occupy the surrounding hills (Porecha, 2023). The majority of the Meiteis are Hindu, with some following the Sanamahi religion, and the Nagas and Kukis, who are predominantly Christians.

Manipur has been grappling with political turmoil for several decades. In 1992, violent clashes between Nagas and Kukis in Manipur resulted in over 1,040 deaths and numerous casualties over the years. The 1993 Manipur Riot, a violent clash between the Meitei and Pangal communities, resulted in the loss of around 130 lives. The Kuki-Zomi Conflict, a 1997–1998 ethnic conflict in Manipur’s Churachandpur district, resulted in 352 deaths, thousands of homes destruction, and over 13,000 displacements. In 2001,

the Union government signed an amended cease-fire agreement with the NSCN (IM), containing the phrase “without territorial limits”. A protest on 18th June 2001 resulted in 18 deaths, the burning of the Manipur Assembly, and an attack on the Chief Minister’s bungalow.

Manipur’s ongoing conflicts are primarily between the Meitei and Kuki groups, fuelled by long-standing animosity and state apathy, influenced by social, physical, and political distribution. It is important to remember that the Kuki terminology in this paper includes Chin-Kuki-Mizo-Zomi ethnic groups. This article delves into the historical context, geographical divide, and ongoing ethnic conflicts surrounding the Meitei-Kuki conflict in Manipur through a thorough review of the existing literature, news reports, and talks.

1. The Hills-Valley Divide

a. Historical divide

Before the British annexation, the Hills and the Valley had separate administrative systems that reflected their incredible geographical and cultural characteristics (Zomi Students’ Federation [ZSF] & Kuki Students’ Organisation [KSO], 2023). In 1891, Manipur was annexed by the British Empire, which caused the merging of the Hills and the valley under British control (Hassan, 2006). Despite their administrative merger, there were stark differences in administrative systems for the Hills and the Valley of Manipur (ZSF & KSO, 2023).

The British maintained the pre-current separate administration to varying degrees (ZSF & KSO, 2023). The separate administration for the Hills intended that the Meitei Maharaja and his Durbar no longer directly administer the affairs of the hills (Devi, 2014). Instead, British officials were appointed to manage the Hill regions and Hills affairs (Jilangamba, 2015). Administration in the hill areas was essentially a village-based autonomous self-governance, guided and governed by its customary laws and practices. It remained outside the state until the attainment of statehood in 1972.

b. The geographical divide

Geographically, Manipur comprises two sets of landmasses popularly known as the valley and the hills. The inner part is a narrow valley that forms only 10 percent of the state’s total area. The Valley is characterized by fertile agricultural land, a dense populace, and a unique set of cultural norms (Kerala Institute of Local Administration [KILA], 2022). The valley is surrounded by hills, which comprise around 90 percent of the total area of Manipur. The Hills are recognized for their rugged terrain, sparse population, and distinct cultural practices (Mungreiphy & Kapoor, 2008). Due to its hilly terrain, many of the hill districts are uninhabitable.

c. Administrative division

The essential differences in geography, demography, and sub-culture necessitated a one-of-a-kind administrative method to govern every region successfully (Hassan, 2007). Manipur can be divided into hills and valleys. Administratively, the state is divided into sixteen districts. Five are Valley districts, and the remaining eleven are Hill districts. Imphal East, Imphal West, Thoubal, Kakching, and Bishnupur districts comprise Manipur's valley districts. The Hills districts include Senapati, Tamenglong, Ukhrul, Chandel, Jiribam, Kamjong, Kangpokpi, Noney, Pherzawl, Tengnoupal, and Churachandpur (Kipgen, 2018). The state is divided into two Parliamentary constituencies: Inner Manipur (Valley) and Outer Manipur (Hills). The state has 60 Legislative Assembly seats, of which 40 are from the valleys and 20 are from the hills.

d. Population division

According to the 2011 census, Manipur has a population of 2,721,756. Manipur is settled by different cognate groups of people that can be divided into broad categories such as Meiteis and Tribals. The Meiteis and the hill districts predominantly inhabit the valley districts inhabited by the tribals. Around 60 percent of the Manipur population live in the valley, and the remaining 40 percent are in the hill regions. Regarding population, Meiteis are the biggest ethnic group and constitute 53 percent of the state's population. Nagas is the second largest group, constituting 24 percent of the state's population, and the Kuki group constitutes 16 percent of the state's population (Nayak, 2012; Sharma, 2016). The Nagas are the primary inhabitants of the northern districts, whereas the Kukis are the primary inhabitants of the southern regions (Wikipedia, 2024). The tribal communities hold Scheduled Tribe (ST) status, while the Meitei people are classified as Other Backward Classes (OBC), with some segments recognized as Scheduled Caste (SC) in specific regions.

e. Religious division

Most of the Meitei follow Hinduism, and the tribals are Christian by faith. Moreover, the peoples of the hills and the valley are pretty far apart regarding their dress style, language, food habits, etc. Emotionally, the hills and valley departed a long time ago. The people of Manipur have been living together without a sense of oneness for centuries, without appreciating or consulting one another. Hills and valleys do not share the same heroes or role models (Ukhrul Times, 2023). The Meiteis, who are predominantly Hindu, have historically been more integrated with the mainstream Indian lifestyle.

On the other hand, the tribals, who are all Christian, have developed distinct cultural practices and beliefs. Additionally, exclusionary castes inside the valley accentuated the divide and created social tensions (Devi, 2014; Vangamla, 2022). The Meitei community used derogatory terms such as "hao", "hao-thu", "hao-macha", and "minai" to refer to

the hill people, which were offensive and demeaning (Khamrang, 2023). These terms implied that the hill people were viewed as slaves, untouchable, unclean, and uncivilized.

f. Linguistic differences

Manipuri (Meitei) language was added to the eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India, making it one of the Official Languages in India on 20th August 1992. Since then, Meiteis in Manipur and Bangladesh have celebrated 20th August as “Manipuri Language Day”. Soon after the language of Manipuri (Meitei) was accorded constitutional recognition, the state government tried to impose the language on the tribal people by making it the official language of the state and making it a compulsory subject in all educational institutions in the state. To popularise the Meitei script (Meitei Majek), the Meitei Erol Eyek Loinasinba Apunba Lup (MEELAL) asked all offices and shops to display sign boards in the Meitei script. The non-Meitei-speaking tribal people have seen this move of the MEELAL as an attempt to impose the script on them. The language issue has become a contention issue and further deepened the hill-valley divides.

2. Root Causes of Meitei-Kuki Conflict

a. Disproportionate representation in the State Legislative Assembly

The minority tribals comprise 40 percent of the state’s population and have only 19 seats in the State Legislative Assembly, indicating that their representation is not proportional to their population size (Telangana Today, 2023). The majority of Meiteis are sabotaging Manipur’s delimitation process to prevent increased tribal representation, a threat to their political power. The 2011 census reveals a significant geographical disparity between tribal MLAs in Manipur’s hill areas and those in the valley, comprising 56 square kilometers and 40,841 people. Despite existing institutional arrangements, tribals in Manipur continue to face obstacles and barriers that prevent them from fully participating in the state’s political affairs (Telangana Today, 2023).

Table 1. Demographic Indicators of Valley and Hills

Demographic Indicators	Valley	Hills
No. of Districts	4	5
Total Existing Assembly Constituencies	40	19+1
Total Population of District	1,633,672	1,222,122
Average Population per Constituency	40,841	61,106
Total Area of Districts (Sq.Km)	2,238	20,089
Average Area per Assembly Constituency (Sq.Km)	56	1,004

Source: The Inevitable Split (Vol. I) Page No. 6 (ZSF & KSO, 2023).

b. Imbalance in the state budget for valley and hills

The Hills and Valley receive unequal funding for development projects, with a disproportionate concentration in the Valley. The State government stopped preparing separate Hill budgets in the 1980s. Despite 90 percent of the state being hilly, the budgetary allocation for their development has never exceeded 10 percent. The Grant-in-Aid (Art. 275) intended for hill development is redirected to valley development (ZSF & KSO, 2023). The state government exacerbates budget inequality, perpetuating underdevelopment and neglecting the hill areas.

The Manipur State Budgets for four years (2017–2018 to 2020–2021) reveal significant imbalances between the valley (Inner Manipur) and the hills (Outer Manipur). Over the four years, the valley has received significant funding for constructing new hospitals, schools, and roads, improving its infrastructure and quality of life (S. J. Singh, 2023). Over 60 percent of villages in the hills lack basic healthcare and unsafe water sources, leading to high waterborne diseases. Even today, the state's resources are concentrated in the valley. Tribals felt exclusion in resource distribution and fund allocation for development.

Table 2. Budget for the Hills and Valley

Financial Year	Total Budget (in Crores)	Valley Budget (in Crores)	Valley Budget (in Percentage)	Hills Budget (in Crores)	Hills Budget (in Percentage)
2017–18	5,000	4,892	97.84	108	2.16
2018–19	4,900	4,750	96.94	150	3.06
2019–20	5,000	4,880	97.60	120	2.40
2020–21	7,000	6,959	99.41	41	0.59
Total (Four Years)	21,900	21,481	97.94	419	2.05

Source: Only Total Separation, Page No. 39 (KReF, 2023)

c. Valley-centric development infrastructure

The Imphal Valley is home to all essential government places of work as well as prestigious educational, technical, and scientific establishments. Manipur Technical University (Takyelpat), National Sports Academy (Khuman Lampak), National Sports University (Khuman Lampak), Central Agricultural University (Lamphelpat), Central Institute of Plastics Engineering and Technology (Takyelpat), Manipur University (Canchipur), Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (Lamphelpat), Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences (Porompat), National Institute of Technology (Langol), Manipur Institute of Technology (Takyelpat), Institute of Bioresources and Sustainable Development (Takyelpat) are confined to Imphal and its outskirts, while the hill districts are neglected (Kipgen & Roy Chowdhury, 2016; ZSF & KSO, 2023). Indeed, the

regularly said declaration that the Imphal Valley is becoming increasingly congested is untrue. It is because of the ever-growing concentration of infrastructures in Imphal Valley, as well as the implementation of a legislative law that prohibits any horizontal growth in the name of agriculture, wooded area, and environmental protection, which most effectively limits their existing land region for habitation (ZSF & KSO, 2023). The people of the hills have been complaining of stepmotherly treatment by the majority of the Meitei-led Manipur government towards the development of the hill areas.

d. Neglect of transport and communication in the hills

According to a record with the help of the Manipur Transport Department, there were two hundred avenue injuries inside the hill districts in the previous year, resulting in 50 fatalities and 150 injuries. These accidents have mainly been attributed to the poor condition of the roads, which have been riddled with potholes and lack proper signage. Furthermore, a survey performed among residents of the hill districts determined that it takes a mean of 4 hours to journey from Kangpokpi to Mao Gate, the simplest 50 kilometers. This is due to the frequent roadblocks and traffic congestion caused by the terrible road conditions. These examples highlight the pressing want for improvements in transportation infrastructure in the hill districts of Manipur (Sharma, 2019).

The loss of transportation and verbal exchange facilities in the hill districts of Manipur has severe outcomes on the socio-economic improvement of the hill people. For example, unreliable roads make it challenging for college students to go back and forth to faculties and schools, mainly due to excessive dropout quotes and restrained academic possibilities. Additionally, the confined entry to healthcare facilities due to transportation bottlenecks results in higher morbidity and mortality costs for most of the hill people. Moreover, the dearth of efficient transportation hinders the boom of neighborhood agencies and impedes exchange with other regions, limiting the economic possibilities for the hill people. These socio-economic results highlight the pressing need for investment in transportation and conversation infrastructure in the hill districts of Manipur (Singh, 2014).

While it is proper that the hill districts are characterized by rugged terrain and limited assets, it is crucial to comprehend that forgetting about delivery and conversation results from each natural and man-made element. While geographically demanding situations may make infrastructure improvement more difficult, proper planning and investment can mitigate these difficulties. Moreover, different states with similar geographical constraints have efficiently progressed their transportation networks, suggesting it is not an insurmountable assignment (Sharma, 2019).

The state authorities must allocate enough funds for infrastructure improvement to cope with the hill districts' overlook of transport and communication. This should consist of street maintenance, the production of the latest roads, and funding for

telecommunications infrastructure. Additionally, it is crucial to interact with nearby communities and tribal leaders to understand their precise wishes and involve them in the decision-making process. By adopting a collaborative method and prioritizing the improvement of transportation and communication facilities, the government can pave the way for the socio-economic improvement of the hill people in Manipur (Steering Committee, 2010).

e. Discrimination in terms of employment safeguards

The tribal communities in Manipur have often complained about their poor representation in government jobs. The state legislative assembly passed the Manipur Reservation of Vacancies in Posts and Services (for SC and ST) Bill on 12th December 1976, and the Governor approved it on 21st February 1977. The rules framed and published in Gazette No. 474 (B) on 10th December 1990 '*for immediate enforcement*' were rescinded in Gazette No. 618 and 639 published by the Chief Secretary on 2nd February 1991 and 5th February 1991 stating that '*the same shall be treated as to have not been issued and existed*'. But it was introduced in the state legislative assembly, and the Manipur Reservation of Vacancies in Posts and Services (for SC and ST) Act 2007 was passed on 19th May 2007. However, the state government has not yet prepared the rules for its implementation, despite repeated complaints from the All-Tribal Students' Union Manipur (ATSUM). The existing reservation policy for tribals in the public sector is 31 percent compared to their population proportion above 37 percent.

Discrimination in employment safeguards is a considerable issue faced by tribal communities in Manipur. Despite their population proportion exceeding 37 percent, the current reservation policy for tribals within the public sector is only 31 percent. The Manipur government has consistently failed to implement ST quota/reservation based on tribal population ratio, as seen in other Northeastern states.

The Manipur Reservation of Vacancies in Posts and Services (for SC and ST) Act 2007 was passed on 19th May 2007 to reserve scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in government jobs (ZSF & KSO, 2023). This act changed into a step toward promoting equal opportunities and illustration for marginalized groups. However, no matter the act's passage, the state authorities must prepare the rules for its implementation. This loss of action has caused repeated complaints from the All-Tribal Students' Union Manipur (ATSUM) and a persistent lack of reservation for tribal groups in the public sector (ZSF & KSO, 2023). The state government needs to prioritize implementing this act and ensure that the rights of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are blanketed and upheld (Kipgen & Roy Chowdhury, 2016).

Discrimination in employment safeguards has had a full-size impact on the illustration of tribal communities in government jobs. A cursory observe the full number of Manipur government employees "category-wise" in various departments shows the

stark under-representation of tribal groups (ZSF & KSO, 2023). This under-representation directly results from the tinkering with the reservation system and quotas in each recruitment procedure. The loss of reservation and the same opportunities in government employment has now not only affected the tribal groups' socio-economic status but also additionally perpetuated systemic discrimination and marginalization. Providing proportionate opportunities and addressing the problem of discrimination is critical for Manipur's general improvement and inclusivity (Luntinsat, 2008).

The government of Manipur has failed to increase recruitment policies and enforce reservation rules successfully. Despite repeated complaints from the All-Tribal Students' Union of Manipur (ATSUM) and the under-representation of tribal groups in authority jobs, the government has not taken sufficient motion to rectify the situation (Bhatia, 2010). Furthermore, the Manipur Reservation of Vacancies in Post and Services (for ST/SC) Act, 1976, has been deemed ineffective for various reasons (ZSF & KSO, 2023). The Manipur government has been chastised for failing to develop its recruitment rules and for failing to implement the "100-point roster" in the reservation. The Manipur government replaced the previous "200-point roster" in 2007 despite tribal protests (WikiMili, 2024). The authorities need to prioritize the development of recruitment guidelines and properly implement reservation regulations to address the problem of discrimination and promote inclusivity in employment (Rocky, 2012).

f. Rejection of the sixth scheduled demand

The Hill Areas Committee (HAC) and District Councils, established to protect tribal interests, have repeatedly been hampered in their proper functioning (TDG Network, 2023). The Manipur Legislative Assembly consistently undermines and bypasses tribal MLAs, with only 20 out of 60 focusing on scheduled matters in Hill areas. The Meiteis, who hold a majority in the Manipur Legislative Assembly, consistently impede the Hill Areas Committee and District Councils' operations. According to the Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act of 1971, the Manipur government can manipulate District Council provisions through arbitrary amendments that are merely cosmetic facelifts (ZSF & KSO, 2023).

Unlike other Autonomous District Councils in Northeast India, Manipur's District Councils have fundamental flaws and insufficient powers. The entity lacks legislative and judicial power and, at its best, enjoys recommending authority (ZSF & KSO, 2023). The HAC and District Councils of Manipur are lagging in protecting and developing tribals, causing challenges in their political aspirations and land rights compared to other Northeast Indian states.

In 1974, the Hill Areas Committee demanded that the Sixth Schedule be extended to Manipur's hill areas, but the Meitei-dominated state government consistently rejected their request. The Sixth Schedule demand, which gained traction among tribals, resulted

in over 20 years of election boycotts from the late 1980s to 2010. The State Cabinet recommended extending the Sixth Schedule provision in Hill Areas three times but with a local adjustment and amendment (ZSF & KSO, 2023). The government has yet to explain a new phrase that has stalled the extension.

g. Misused of Manipur Land Revenue (MLR) and Land Reforms (LR) Acts, 1975

There is tremendous pressure on land in the valley. Therefore, the valley people have been lobbying for a change in the old land laws. The state government of Manipur tries to change the law to alienate tribal land in a planned manner (Sharma, 2016). The majority community made several attempts to grab the tribal lands through various means and policies. A living example is the inclusion of many tribal villages. It lands under the police jurisdiction of valley districts on the pretext of better and more convenient administration against the wish of the tribal people, repeated amendments to the Manipur Land Revenue & Reform Act, etc (Misao, 2015).

The MLR & LR Act 1960, enacted by Parliament on 13th September 1960, applies to the entire state, excluding Hill Areas (BW Online Bureau, 2023). The 1975 amendment to the MLR and LR Acts marked a significant milestone by expanding their applicability to Hill Areas and Moreh Town. The policy permits non-tribals to occupy vast areas of Moreh, leading tribals to lose their ancestral lands. The Manipur government violated Article 371 'C' by unauthorisedly utilizing the MLR & LR (Amendment) Act, 1975, without proper legal procedures or the consent of Hill Area Committees. In 1989, the Manipur government's Sixth Amendment to the MLR & LR Act, without consulting the Hill Area Committee, led to grievances among Hill tribes.

Table 3. List of some identified Hill Villages switched into Valley by the Government of Manipur

Village Name	Village Name	Village Name
Kuraopokpi village	Ekpan Khullen village	Ekpan Khunou village
Tokpa Khul village	Thanomba village	Tumnoupokpi village
Heinou Khunou village	Malken Helkothang village	Kangoi Khullen village
Tumayon Khunou village	Tumayon Khullen village	Aimol Khullen village
Keithelmanbi village	Saitol Khunou village	Aimol Khunjai village
Khoiren Tampak village	Saitol Khullen villag	Phunan Sambum village
Torbung village	Sagang village	Purum Tampak village
Torbung Loklaphai village	Kangoi Khunou village	Mahao Tera village
Tonsen Tampak village	Tonsen Khullen village	Toupokpi village
Maring Phunal village	Mahao village	Tonsen village

Source: Only Total Separation, Page No.46 (KReF, 2023)

The Manipur government's Department of Revenue has incorporated tribal lands and villages from the periphery of the valley into valley districts, causing distress to Hill tribes. Some of the hill villages which were switched to the valley are given below:

h. Anti-tribal legislations

The Manipur conflict between hills and valleys is rooted in land rights, with legislation aimed at controlling lands in hilly areas exacerbating tensions between the tribal Meitei and tribal communities. The Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reform Act of 1960 expanded state control over hill areas in Manipur, resulting in widespread tribal opposition and resentment. The Manipur Hill Areas (Acquisition of Chief's Rights) Act of 1967 significantly impacted the conflict between hills and valleys by empowering the government to acquire chiefs' land rights (Khamrang, 2023).

The Manipur legislature passed three controversial bills on 31st August 2015, namely, "the Protection of Manipur People (PMP) Bill 2015", "The Manipur Land Revenue and Reforms (Seventh Amendment) Bill 2015", and "The Manipur Shops and Establishment (Second Amendment) Bill, 2015" (Counterview Desk, 2023). Manipur's assembly session passed bills without proper discussion, violating the "Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business" and bypassing the Hill Areas Committee (ZSF & KSO, 2023). The Assembly passed all the controversial Bills as money bills, though they had nothing to do with money. It was done with the sole objective of bypassing the Hill Area Committee (HAC), composed of representatives of the Autonomous District Councils. The State Government knew the HAC would not consent to the Bills. Therefore, the Bills were presented as money bills, so a reference to the HAC became unnecessary (Gupta, 2016).

The tribal people think the bill was designed to snatch away the tribal lands. The tribal people contend that the ambiguous definition of "*Manipur People*" is restrictive and would leave many tribal living in the hill district as outsiders. The hill tribes protest against those Bills passed by the State Assembly last year, 2015, which they think are "*anti-tribal*" and discriminatory. On 1st September 2015, the police opened fire on a group of people in Churachandpur town who were protesting against the three bills passed by the State Legislature the previous day. Nine persons, including an eleven-year-old boy, were killed in police firing. After widespread anger and protest, the controversial bills were withdrawn in favor of the indigenous tribals.

i. Declaring tribal areas as Reserve Forests (RF), Protected Forests (PF), and Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS)

The state government declared large hills as "Reserved Forests", "Protected Forests", and Wildlife Sanctuaries (WLS) without following proper procedures (ZSF & KSO, 2023). The Chief Secretary of the Government of Manipur has decided to cancel all land ownership documents issued within reserved and protected areas on 3rd April 2023. The

Kuki tribes, residing in these hills for centuries, have been systematically violated by this action. The public and tribal chiefs were not provided with any public notification for claims and objections within the specified timeframe. Declaring plain portions where district headquarters towns are located as wetlands (WL) has exacerbated the wounds of tribal sentiments. The Government of Manipur's Department of Forest is systematically encroaching on the lands of the Kukis and Nagas without proper land acquisition norms or compensation.

j. Illegal immigration

In March 2023, leaders of several student clubs representing the Meitei community protested outside Biren Singh's home, claiming that "illegal immigrants from Myanmar, Nepal, and Bangladesh" were marginalizing the "Indigenous people of Manipur". They called for the introduction of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the formation of a Population Commission. The Meitei groups claim that there has been an unnatural increase in population in the hills. Kukis have repeatedly been accused of being "immigrants" or "foreigners," meaning that they came from Myanmar and are not indigenous to Manipur (Deka, 2023).

Anti-Kuki sentiments rose further when several Myanmar refugees, mainly belonging to the Chin group and sharing ethnic origins with several tribes residing in the hills of Manipur and Mizoram, sought asylum in these states following the crackdown by the military junta (Deka, 2023). The Mizos view the Chins fleeing the military crackdown in Myanmar as kin and have provided them with assistance, including food, shelter, and education, as they seek refuge. The Kukis of Manipur share an ethnic connection with the Chins fleeing the violence. Biren Singh's government formed a cabinet subcommittee to identify illegal immigrants and establish temporary shelters to help them return to their home country (B. Singh, 2023).

The Kuki settlements in India, Myanmar, and Bangladesh existed prior to the British administration. In 1894, British colonists absorbed the Kukis and their area into British India and British Burma without their consent. In 1947, East Pakistan was separated from British India. The Kukis did not cross into Manipur Territory; rather, Kuki indigeneity in the hills predates the establishment of the Manipur state (Chongloi, 2023).

During the India Today Conclave East 2018 session titled "Long Road to Recovery: Putting Manipur Back on the Map", the Manipur Chief Minister stated that there are no illegal infiltrators in Manipur (India Today Conclave, 2018). According to the 2010 publication "Manipur Ke Awas Hind Ek Shradhanjali" (Hindi version) and "Manipur Gi Indian National Army (INA) Freedom Fighters Singda Katba Shradhanjali" (Meitei Version) by the Department of Art and Culture, Government of Manipur, it is documented that 79 Kuki Freedom Fighters were among the 112 from Manipur. These records serve as evidence that Kukis actively participated in freedom fighting, debunking any

notion that they were foreigners. Kuki people, proud Indian citizens, have significantly contributed to India's freedom movement, independence, and nation-building.

Table 4. Community-Wise List of Indian Freedom Fighters in Manipur

Sl. No.	Community	No. of Freedom Fighters
1	Kuki	79
2	Meitei/Manipuri	27
3	Bengali/Chowdhury	3
4	Punjabi/Marwari	1
5	Tangkhul Naga	1
Total	All Communities	112

Source: Only Total Separation, Page No. 22 (KReF, 2023)

There is no abnormal rise in the Kuki population in Manipur. The population of Manipur was 2,84,488 according to the 1901 census, with the Kuki community accounting for 41,262 people, or 14.5 percent of the state's population at the time. According to the 2011 census, the Kuki population is 4,48,214, while the state's total population is 28,55,794. The Kuki population has grown at less than 2 percent each year for the past 110 years (Chongloi, 2023).

The Kukis argued that Myanmar's military coup led to a small number of refugees crossing the border, but these do not account for the significant population increase in hill districts. The Meiteis should not create animosity or label the entire community as illegal immigrants, as it is different from refugees. The state has the legal authority to address the consequences of the refugee issue and take appropriate action.

k. Poppy cultivators

On 26th June 2018, the Chief Minister of Manipur announced the initiation of the "War on Drugs" campaign. The "War on Drugs" campaign has utilized a combination of coercive and non-coercive methods. These approaches include offering alternative livelihoods to poppy farmers, providing incentives for drug seizures, and conducting forced eradication drives. Additionally, non-governmental organizations and civil bodies were involved in efforts to raise awareness among the populace, mainly aimed at discouraging poppy cultivation. On 25th February 2021, representatives from 33 communities in Manipur collectively pledged to cease poppy cultivation, uniting under the banner of the "All Communities Convention for a Pledge Against Illegal Poppy Plantation". This action responded to the Chief Minister's call for support in the "War on Drugs" initiative.

Despite this, Meitei Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) endorsed Biren Singh and portrayed Kuki communities as "poppy cultivators" and declared war against them (Manipur

MyGov, 2022). The Manipur Against Poppy Farming (MAPC) movement, organized by a group of intellectuals, social and political thinkers, young individuals, and legal experts, recognizes Biren Singh's endeavors in addressing poppy farming (Deka, 2023). However, MAPC urges caution against singling out any specific community in this endeavor.

The hill people stated that they, too, were against poppy cultivation, but they criticized the government for targeting the hill tribes under the pretext of eradicating poppy cultivation. The tribals agree that the drug problem poses a severe threat to Manipur society. It should be addressed collaboratively, with all communities working together. Simply blaming one community will not successfully tackle the problem (Deka, 2023).

Meitei communities are also engaging in poppy cultivation. Manipur has 2,340 acres of poppy cultivation, primarily in Naga-dominated areas and 35 in other areas. In contrast to 1,083 Muslims, 381 Meiteis, and 181 other communities, 873 Kuki community members were arrested under the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act between 2017 and 2023 (Das, 2023).

In 2018, Additional Superintendent of Police Thounaojam Brinda made a spectacular arrest that drew widespread notice. Despite being arrested, the state police quickly freed the accused. According to the Police Officer, the decision to release the alleged drug lord followed strict instructions from the state Chief Minister Biren Singh (Roy, 2020). Brinda courageously expressed in an interview that Chief Minister Biren Singh is not combating the illicit drug trade but rather is involved in it, serving as a patron and protector of the drug mafia.

Reza Borhani, an Australian national aged fifty, was detained by police in Bandra, Mumbai, in possession of a large quantity of LSD, a psychedelic substance worth 1.8 crore rupees. Subsequent investigations by Frontier Manipur revealed that Chief Minister Biren Singh allegedly handed Borhani a license to import cannabis seeds, blooms, and leaves from Manipur (Laba & Chaoba, 2022).

On 19th May 2023, MLA Kh Raghmani Singh wrote a letter to Union Home Minister Amit Shah on the recovery of 50kg of opium from two Meiteis by Delhi Police in February 2019 (The Sangai Express, 2023). In his communication, Singh expressed concerns about the involvement of "well-connected families and powerful political families" in the drug trade within Manipur.

On 21st February 2023, The Times of India reported that N. Biren Singh, the Chief Minister of Manipur, was involved in drug smuggling. The Delhi Police Special Cell discovered 50 kgs of opium valued at Rs. 10 crores in a car near Sarita Vihar in the Badarpur border area. Delhi Police apprehended Chief Minister N. Biren Singh's drug agents, Ranbir Singh and Loyangamba Itocha, on 21st February 2023. The "Itocha International Drug Cartel," a drug dealer agency, is accused of cultivating poppy crops, supported by Meitei capitalist groups and Manipur's Chief Minister N. Biren Singh. According to the Manipur

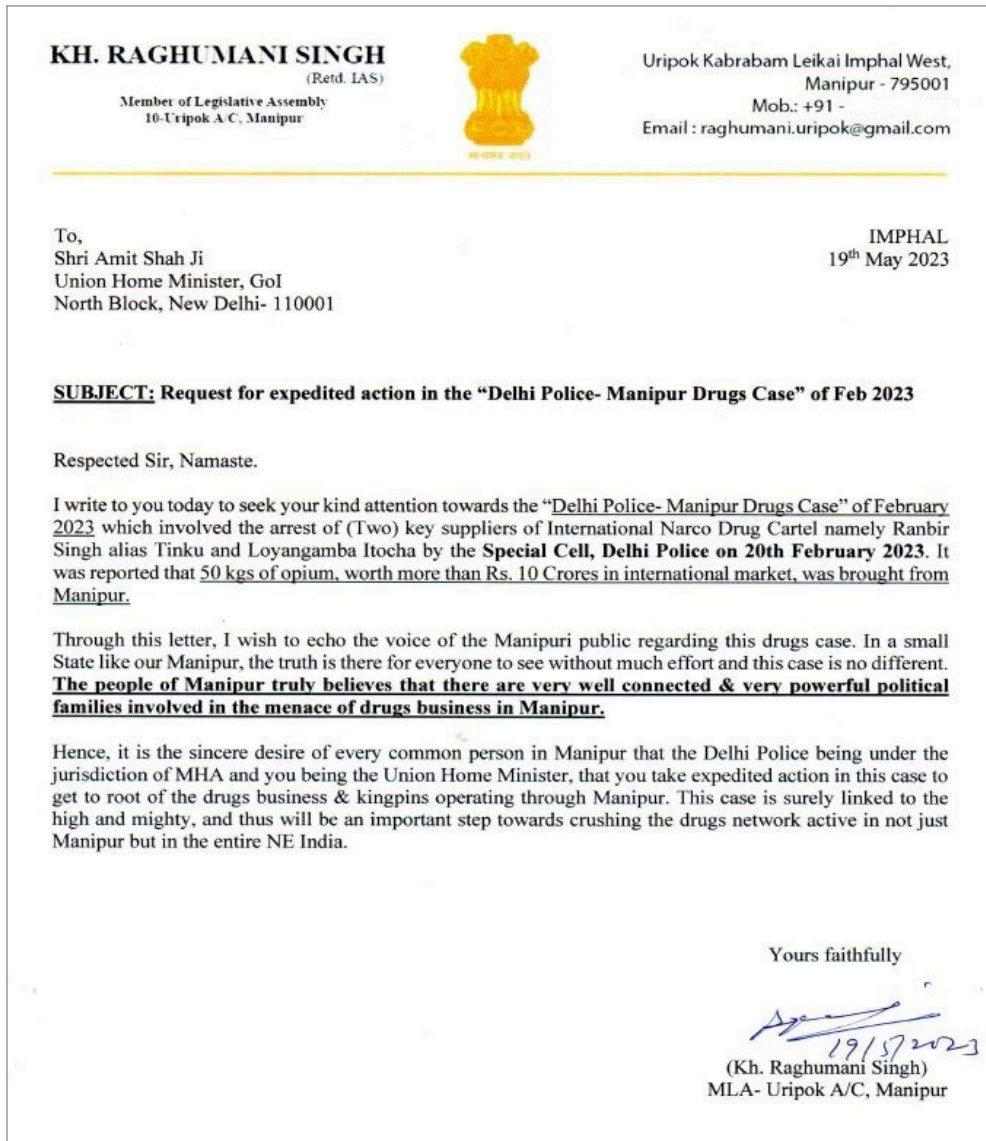


Figure 2. Kh. Raghumani Singh’s Letter to Shri Amit Shah

Source: Facebook Wall post (Raghumani for Uripok, 2023)

Police’s Narcotics and Border Affairs website, the majority of opium manufacturing laboratories are located in the Imphal Valley (ZSF & KSO, 2023).

The Kuki Civil Society organization and churches strongly opposed poppy plantations, imposing severe penalties for those found guilty. KNO issued Shoot-at-Sight orders (No. ZG/KC12-6/08, Manmasi, 16th January 2023), warning cultivators to stop poppy

cultivation in Kuki Hills. The labeling of the entire Kukis community as involved in poppy cultivation is unacceptable.

Poppy planting has been prevalent in Manipur due to the vicinity of the “Golden Triangle” and a lack of means of income for the hill people, including Kukis, Nagas, and other communities (Leth, 2023). However, targeting only the poorest growers would be ineffectual in combating the problem. Social Scientists such as Dhanabir Laishram contend that focusing simply on cultivators will not solve the problem. He emphasizes that the problem affects numerous participants, including transporters and dealers. Furthermore, he points out that a wealthy segment of the Meitei community primarily sponsors poppy growth (Chongloi, 2023).

1. Narco-terrorism

The narrative from Imphal suggested that the riots were orchestrated by the Suspension of Operations (SOO) groups. On 10th March 2023, the Biren Singh government made a surprising cabinet decision to withdraw from the tripartite Suspension of Operation (SOO) agreement with the Kuki insurgent groups, namely the Kuki National Army (KNA) and United Peoples’ Front (UPF), despite the Union government’s desire for peaceful negotiations with these groups (Agarwala & Leivon, 2023).

On 24th March 2023, the state government selectively removed the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), limiting its revocation to the Imphal valley. Notably, this move occurred despite ongoing peace talks between the Kuki insurgent groups and the Centre, while the Meitei insurgents active in the Imphal valley were not engaged in any peace negotiations. In hindsight, this action was viewed by the Kuki tribals as a biased maneuver, seemingly laying the groundwork for violence against the Kukis, which subsequently unfolded a few months later. The Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), the top body of Meitei civil society organizations, proclaimed a “national war against the Kuki narco-terrorists” at its public meeting on 7th June 2023 (Kalita, 2023).

According to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), there are currently eight terrorist or unlawful organizations operating in Manipur, all affiliated with the Meitei community. Many of these organizations operate camps in Myanmar, namely the Peoples’ Liberation Organisation (PLA) and Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL), and have developed informal alliances with the Myanmar Military. These terrorist organizations are advocating for independence from India and have been engaged in armed conflict against the Indian state, primarily targeting the Indian army. The insurgency originating in the valley itself has resulted in over 2,500 casualties over the past three decades alone.

The Kuki Armed groups have maintained a non-violent stance towards Indian security forces and have abided by the laws of the nation. When the Indian government offered the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement approximately two decades ago, the Kuki group was among the first to sign it, and they have remained in their designated

camps ever since. Despite being small in number, the Kuki SoO groups have refrained from attacking security forces and have confined themselves to their designated camps as per the agreement.

Table 5. Unlawful Organisation in Manipur

Sl. No.	Name of Organisation
1	Kangleipak Communist Party
2	Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup
3	Manipur Peoples' Liberation Front
4	People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak
5	People's Liberation Army
6	United Nations Liberation Front

Source: MHA, 2015.

The Suspension of Operations (SOO) agreement mandates that insurgents must store their weapons in locked storage at designated Camps, with regular monitoring jointly conducted by the insurgents and security sources. There is no convincing evidence that the Kuki militant factions under the SOO have broken any ground rules. State Chief Minister N. Biren Singh has expressly stated that all arms of the Kuki factions under the suspension of operations are intact in their authorized camps (V. Singh, 2023). Army Sources have refuted reports claiming that two camps of insurgent groups, which had signed a tripartite cease-fire agreement with the Centre and the Manipur government, were found utterly empty in the India-Myanmar border districts of Tengenoupal and Chandel. "These two SOO-designated camps are being regularly checked. It is confirmed that these camps remain occupied as of the current date", army sources informed NDTV. They stated that reports claiming the SOO camps were found empty were largely rumors spread on social media and propagated by vested interests on the ground.

Kuki Village Volunteers did not launch retaliatory attacks until 24 hours after the violence began in Churachandpur. Volunteers from the afflicted villages took up arms against the Meitei crowd and the state police force, believing that the police were unable to protect their community and offered no assistance. At the same time, Kuki houses were torched (Kuthar, 2023).

m. Eviction of tribal villages and demolition of Christian churches

The state leader, Biren Singh, from the Meitei community, alleges that the Kukis are encroaching on increasing forest land. Meiteis attributed the growth of new villages in the hills to illegal immigrants and refugees.

On 7th November 2022, the Manipur government issued an order nullifying previous directives from the 1970s and 1980s that excluded specific communities from the

projected Churachandpur-Khoum protected forest (Wikipedia, 2024). This decision effectively categorized 38 ancestral villages in the Churachandpur district as encroachments. In February 2023, the BJP-led state government launched an eviction campaign in Churachandpur, Kangpokpi, and Tengenp, referring to the locals as encroachers (Wikipedia, 2024). A committee established by the state government chaired by the Chief Secretary on 3rd April 2023 canceled all land and property documents as village recognition within designated reserved and protected forest areas. Notably, these actions were taken without any accompanying plan for the rehabilitation of the displaced tribal population.

What stands out is that the forest surveys, inquiries, evictions, and demolitions were conducted solely in Kuki-dominated areas, reinforcing the perception among the Kuki community that they were being unfairly targeted. On 6th December 2022, a surprise eviction drive occurred in Kangchup, Kangpokpi district, leading to a violent confrontation and injuries of many people, including one police officer. On 20th February 2023, the government demolished all houses in K. Songjang village, Henglep Sub-Division, as part of an eviction drive, citing the area as Khoum Protected Forest. This sparked outrage among the Kuki communities.

The state government declined to legalize tribal churches despite having regularised 188 Meitei Hindu Temples since 2010. This raises concern about the fairness and equality of treatment regarding religious institutions. Three tribal churches in the Tribal Colony, Imphal, were evicted and demolished at night on 11th April 2023, violating the law that prohibits demolition before sunrise or after sunset.

Kuki culture mandates the next-in-line sibling to lead new villages when the community's population reaches a certain threshold, resulting in new villages in similar geographical areas. The assumption that illegal immigrants or refugees inhabit these villages is incorrect. Meiteis' labeling of Kukis as illegal immigrants is influenced by their lack of understanding of their socio-economic lifestyle, disregarding their cultural significance. The state government does not hold "Khas Land" (waste land) in tribal hill areas, which are owned by tribal communities or village heads and are not subject to cadastral surveys. Article 371C requires the state to engage with village administrations, district councils, and the Hill Areas Committee (HAC) before declaring certain areas Protected Forests (Kharay, 2021).

n. Illegitimate Scheduled Tribe (ST) demand

Since 2012, the Meiteis have been advocating for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status, citing the economic and cultural marginalization caused by the influx of migrants from other states (Haokip, 2015). The Kukis and Nagas strongly oppose the Meiteis' request for ST status, citing concerns that it may diminish their rights and benefits. Kukis and Nagas believe that some Meitei already receive reservation benefits under the Scheduled Caste, Other

Backward Classes, and Economically Weaker Sections quotas; if the remaining Meitei want to change their caste, they should register in the said caste, not in ST (Hueiyen, 2013; ZSF & KSO, 2023). Meiteis' ST status could disrupt tribal protections, disrupt the Hill Areas Committee, and eliminate District Council approval for land acquisition. Tribals' status in the Manipur Legislative Assembly will be reduced, with Meiteis competing in all constituencies, potentially threatening their lands and existence due to state treatment of minorities.

o. The spark of the violence

The Meiteis have been advocating for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for their community. Biren Singh has expressed a willingness to help this cause, and the Manipur High Court has ordered the administration to speed up the procedure. The Manipur High Court delivered an extraordinary ruling on 27th March 2024, asking the administration to recommend including the Meitei group on the Scheduled Tribes list to the Centre (Lakshman, 2023). Both Naga and Kuki tribals perceived this move as an attempt by the Meitei community to encroach upon their land. If the Meiteis were granted ST status, they could purchase land in the hills, which is presently prohibited.

On 3rd May 2023, the All-Tribal Student Union of Manipur (ATSUM) held a peaceful "Tribal Solidarity March" in Manipur's Hill districts (WikiMili, 2024). Many tribal groups, including Zomi, Kuki, Naga, Hmar, and Mizo, participated in the peaceful rally. Valley-based Meitei organizations organized counter-blockades in valley areas the evening before a peaceful rally after discovering the rally (ZSF & KSO, 2023). A rally in Churachandpur ended peacefully at 1:05 p.m. after tribal civil societies and student organizations submitted a memorandum to the Indian President and Prime Minister.

Around 3:00 p.m., Meitei miscreants set fire to the pillar of the Anglo-Kuki War Centenary Gate in Leisang village. According to an eyewitness, miscreants arrived in a white Bolero and started the fire before fleeing the scene. Miscreants attacked returning rally-goers in Churachandpur district's border areas, escalating the conflict between the two communities (ZSF & KSO, 2023). The burning of houses belonging to the Kuki communities in Kangvai, 2 km from Leisang, and the killing of Pastor Seikhohao Kipgen escalated the violence. The violence spread to Imphal City and other valley districts, and the Meitei mob committed systematic arson and extermination (ZSF & KSO, 2023).

Summary and Conclusion

Revising political representation resource distribution and addressing historical imbalances through streamlining legislative assembly constituencies and decentralization can help the existing Hills-Valley divide. Equitable policies are needed to promote peace by ensuring fair resource distribution, addressing historical injustices, and providing economic development and social integration opportunities for both communities.

It is essential to look into the root causes of every issue prevailing in the state to bring an amicable solution. The demand of the tribals, or the “Sixth Schedule,” has never been implemented in the hills. The government could try giving the Sixth Schedule Provision to the hill areas with special protection of land and land ownership without disturbing the territorial integration of the state. Another demand of the tribal is that there should be equal representation of the people living in the valley and the hills. No doubt, equal sharing of seats in the state Legislative Assembly, as recommended by the Delimitation Commission from the central government, will help the integration of the state. The hill people see the over-concentration of infrastructure for development in the valley districts as discrimination. The state has to make an accommodative policy by diversifying developmental activities proportionately.

There is a need to end valley-centric governance. There is also a need for development in favor of the hills. It is, therefore, essential for the state to formulate policies for the moral and emotional integration of Manipur. Territorial integration without emotional integration is not likely to last long. Therefore, territorial integration should be preceded by emotional integration. Both the Meiteis and tribals should be open to the possibility of finding a solution to a third idea that is different from their original claims. All communities, irrespective of tribes and non-tribes, should learn to live together within the territory with equal respect.

The Meitei-Kuki conflict requires political will from both communities, requiring genuine commitment from leaders to resolve issues and work towards peaceful coexistence. Inclusive dialogue is crucial for open and honest communication between Meiteis and Kukis representatives, fostering understanding, empathy, trust, and addressing grievances, and finding common ground. The Union and State governments must swiftly address the Meitei-Kuki conflict by adopting a balanced approach to restore democracy and equality among the Kuki and Meitei communities. The current situation requires immediate action to prevent further loss of lives in this ongoing conflict.

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