

Peace through McDonaldization? Exploring the theory of Golden Arches in Pakistan-India relations through a complex interdependence lens

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Abstract: This study elaborates characteristics of the theory of Golden Arches (GA) to assess whether the military ambitions concerning Pakistan–India relations were affected in the wake of McDonaldization or not, while establishing connections with the theory of Complex Interdependence (CI) for a more critical inquiry. *McDonald's* and other multinational corporations create economic interdependence between countries and increase the costs of the conflict, which can contribute to more peaceful relationships. However, the relationship between India and Pakistan is tensed with historical distrust. Although economic interdependence may limit the freedom of maneuver in the security sphere, the competition in the security and military fields, along with the conflicting claims to the territory of the disputed region of Kashmir, still has a significant impact on Islamabad and New Delhi's policies. Larger volumes of trade and investment do not erase periodic crises and militarized disputes in the region. Consumer brands can only partially erase geostrategic dynamics from the calculations of States. Security based nationalist approaches continue to play a significant role in decision making while globalization influences economic policies. Still fast-food diplomacy that could comprehensively be called *McDonaldization* between India and Pakistan could be seen, yet the impact it could bring on changing the bitter rivalry between the two countries is questionable without addressing the core issues as emphasized by CI.

Keywords: Golden Arches, complex interdependence, McDonaldization, Pakistan, India

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Introduction: Pakistan-India relations

The relations between Pakistan and India have always been tense since the formation of two countries from the subcontinent of India in 1947 (Ahmad 2016). Some key events and tensions that have shaped Pakistan-India relations include Partition of British India, Kashmir conflict, several wars, Nuclearization, water disputes etc. (Mitra 2001).

The partition of British India into Pakistan and India in 1947 provided the basis for future conflicts (Chaudhri 2016; Khan 2007). During this period, there was a massive displacement of populations along religious lines and horrific violence (Dixit 2002) and loss of life, which determined future relations.

In this regard, the first conflict between Pakistan and India was shortly after the partition in 1947 over the issues of the disputed territory of Kashmir. Pakistan argued that Kashmir should be part of Pakistan since it was Muslim, while India said the territory belonged to India because of the instrument of accession (Chaudhri 2016; Thomas 1992; Wint 1967). Kashmir is still the central unresolved matter between the two nations. The dispute has led to several wars and there has been militancy over the territory of Kashmir ever since (Prasad & Pal 1987; Schofield & Victoria 2003).

After this, the two countries have gone to war and engaged in armed conflicts many times since the partition (Christophe Jaffrelet 2004). Some of these are the first war over the disputed territory of Kashmir in 1947 and other wars in 1965 and 1971 (Dixit 2002; Lyon 2008). The wars led to the deaths of people, drains of resources to the military at the expense of their development, and animosity. The greatest source of tension is still the unresolved Kashmir issue.

Both India and Pakistan have conducted nuclear tests in 1998, although India had already achieved success in nuclear weapon testing in 1974. Both are officially nuclear weapon states (Sublette 2001). This nuclearization raised concerns that any future conflict between the two historical foes could trigger nuclear warfare. The nuclear arms race is still a destabilizing factor in the region as well as the deterrent.

Tensions and conflicts have sometimes been fueled by growths of religious nationalism and extremism on both sides. Religion is still a contentious factor and increases threat perceptions. Between the two nations, religious fundamentalism is also among the triggers of security dilemma.

There are disputes on the water sharing of rivers in the Indus River system, construction of new dams and the unfulfilled water allocation

agreements (Alam 2002; Haider 2010). The contested water resource is the Indus Water system, which comprises the Indus River, a main river Basin and several others. Usages of these waters were in dispute between Britain and the newly born two nation-states of India and Pakistan after the partition of British India in 1947 (Haider 2010). Nevertheless, there remains much controversy regarding the hydroelectric structures, which India intends to construct on the rivers. Pakistan has expressed its concern with reference to the Indian power projects to regulate and reallocate the rivers flowing to Pakistan (Haines 2023).

Theory of the Golden Arches (GA)

This term was invented by Thomas L. Friedman, an American journalist, author of the book “The Lexus and the Olive Tree” published in 1999. Friedman claims that “no two countries that have a *McDonald’s* have ever gone to war with each other since the two nations got their McDonalds” (Friedman 1999). The theory stems from the existence of *McDonald’s* restaurants all over the world signifying economic integration between the countries. The existence of these outlets signifies that the two countries have some degree of economic interconnectivity, and they share some form of culture and social relations that may make it difficult for them to go to war (Altinors 2016). The theory explains that as more countries move up the development ladder, embrace consumerist values, and get Western franchises, their interests and values become aligned, thus decreasing the likelihood of warfare.

GA implies that globalization leads to increased economic entwinement of countries and thus fosters peace and discourages war. Nations can have similar economic and social affinities. However, the theory is deterministic in the sense of arguing that war is averted in all circumstances by the fact of common economic interests, especially when clear examples of conflict between the economically globalized nations are also present (Petach 2013).

On the same note, it is the economic interconnectivity that makes nations stick together through companies like *McDonald’s*. Franchises create mutual dependence and personal stake. But skeptics claim that globalization and economic bonds do not guarantee people’s interconnection and peaceful relations between countries (Friedman 1996). Politics and nationalism can still bring rivalry. However, the GA theory is at best an interesting and provocative idea that offers a

more positive vision of the world today, but which relies on several key assumptions about globalization and the nature of culture and the sources of conflict. Its determinism concerning commerce being a driving force towards peace is especially problematic (Li 2008). But it does offer fresh insights into the process of economic integration, and it reflects wider discussions on globalization and geo-political realities in a globalized world.

Through GA, the fact that there is a *McDonald's*, in Friedman's view, means that there is a measure of globalization and of economic integration that makes warfare impossible. GA assumes that the people with the middle class, who have access to some of the luxuries of globalization such as fast foods, are less likely to get involved in deadly conflicts (Li 2008; Ritzer 2013). The theory presumes that nations which develop economic relationships through global business and MNCs have a higher motivating force to settle conflicts without violence to improve their economy. *McDonalds* outlet is thus symbolically used to be a society with extended economic relations (Ritzer 2013).

The GA theory rests on several key assumptions about economic development and globalization (Figure 1):

Figure1. Essentials of Golden Arches Theory



- International firms such as *McDonald's* enter stable nations with growing middle-income groups and disposable income for food products such as burgers. Thus, *McDonald's* is an indicator of health or otherwise of the economy.
- Globalization of business brings about the integration of the world economy where countries become entangled in economic relations making high the costs of conflicts that may disrupt trade.
- Fast foods are said to be associated with middle class societies which are less likely to embrace nationalist militarism and are more concerned with international cooperation.

While novel, political scientists and economists (Figure 1) have critiqued the GA:

- This is important to note that while *McDonald's* can be associated with peace, correlation does not necessarily imply causation. Some might argue that such countries as those in the EU will not go to war anyway as they have similar interests.
- It also has the effect that fast globalization can lead to tensions between societies and thus to conflicts, so more globalizations do not necessarily mean more peace.
- Most of the recent wars have been civil wars or insurgencies in countries that are already interconnected through commerce and investments such as through infrastructures like *McDonald's*. International relations in the world do not have to mean that there would be no civil unrest resulting in violence.

A few exceptions to GA conflict prevention claims

A few exceptions, in the Golden Arches Theory, have been found over time. Two wars have broken out between *McDonald's* countries since the hypothesis was initially put forward. NATO bombarded Yugoslavia (*McDonald's* in 1988) in 1999 during the Kosovo War, but the conflict was over in 78 days (Knutsson 2007). Another instance was the Kargil War between India (*McDonald's* in 1996) and Pakistan (*McDonald's* in 1998). The other instance occurred in 2006 when Israel (*McDonald's* in 1993) and Lebanon (*McDonald's* in 1999) fought a war (Knutsson 2007). The conflict between Russia (*McDonald's*, 1990) and Ukraine (*McDonald's*, 1997) is also termed as an exception to GA claims of conflict prevention. Nagorno Karabakh region of Azerbaijan (*McDonald's* in 1999) has been a conflict zone due to Armenian aggression, but since Armenia does not have a *McDonald's*, the Azerbaijan–Armenia issue does not become an exception.

Theory of Complex Interdependence (CI)

CI was established in the 1970s by Keohane and Nye. It challenges the realist approaches of international politics and is supposed to provide an understanding of the part played by non-state actors in world politics as well as how states interact in the international system without wars (Keohane & Nye 2000).

Stakeholders of companies operating in the global village share many similarities and dependencies with each other, which

intrinsically become main features of CI: The theory suggests that multiple channels connect societies and the state to civil society interactions do not only take place through diplomatic process, but also through other forms including business networks, migration and international organizations (Ibid). Unlike realism where issues are layered with military security on top, CI does not categorize issues as hierarchical (Cohen 2008). There are various subject matters that one side may consider of more significance than the other, including human rights, climate change, and economic plans.

CI minimizes the role of military force. When there are several problems in the world and economic factors are dominant, military force and threats are not especially important in the system of CI. Sanctions and other measures are far more impactful in terms of gaining leverage and pursuing certain programs and agendas than force (Oatley 2019). Since states, regimes, and international organizations are interdependent, the latter can perform the functions of coordination and control. For instance, the UN, the WTO, and other international organizations have become more significant.

There are far reaching implications for the rise of globalization and transnational forces for International Relations: internationalization of capital, migration, trade, and communication results in societies becoming more entwined and decreasing the ability of states to act independently (Oatley 2019; Farrell & Newman 2019). The prominence of non-state actors with multiple intertwined connectivity paradigms is a crucial factor studied under IR: Topping the list are the non-governmental organizations, corporations, and interest groups who play a significant role in influencing politics at the global level and determining state preferences on various matters.

There are instances of cooperation despite tensions between hostile nations, i.e., between India and Pakistan were buying onions despite military conflicts by Pakistan is a suited example. Thus, even if two states are opposing ideological camps or are rivals, they can always identify areas of shared interest that can lead to cooperation. It can be noted that there are also some reasons to cooperate at least on some aspects despite having shared conflicts of interest. Thus, realizing globalization and transnational problems means thinking beyond states and beyond military force.

This theory is conflicting with the realist's view of world politics since it examines interconnection of modern states and societies

through multiple and diverse ways. Some key components (Figure 2) and propositions of the theory include:

Multiple channels

There are many forms of interaction between societies, such as the exchange of information, people, goods, money, and social movements, in addition to diplomacy between countries (Oatle 2019). This results in the development of intricate systems of integration that establish political, economic, social and technological interfaces at the international, regional and local levels.

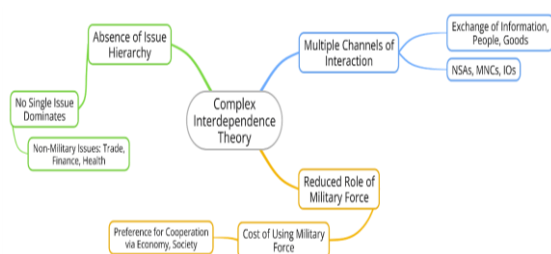
Absence of hierarchy

It questions the realist perception that security concerns are the primary concern of international politics. Instead, there is no clear priority between issues and military security ends up having to negotiate with other issues that are not inherently conflict oriented such as finance, trade, disease prevention, etc. (Braddon 2012). Traditional security threats are complemented by economic, social, environmental, health, and political concerns.

Reduced role of military force

Since there are no security related matters and economic interdependence between societies, they can also be addressed jointly, intricate interdependence reduces the likelihood of employing severe force (Farrell & Newman 2019). Thus, although states still have military capabilities, they learn the cost of using hard power. Therefore, the decrease in the probability of a threat or actual application of force in interstate relations is now characterized by dense webs of economic and social ties.

Figure 2. Essentials of Complex Interdependence Theory



Explanation of the main concepts

GA: MNCs like McDonald's reduce the likelihood of military conflict

“McDonald's countries are thought to be different to other countries in two major ways that Friedman emphasizes; (1) they are more open to

international trade and investment and (2) have a large enough middle-class to support and justify a *McDonald's* franchise” (Knutsson 2007, 3). The rationale for this theory is that the occupancy of a *McDonald's* franchise is symptomatic of globalization and integration into the world economy. It is likely that countries with McDonald's have open economies that are integrated in international production networks, cross-border investments, capital flows, and aligned with the global standards and regulations (Li 2008; Ritzer 2013).

Therefore, if two countries have *McDonald's* stores, it means those countries have harmonious economic relations and common effects. War-making would result in a colossal social disruption; it would reverse the process of economic integration and cause the loss of prosperity that has stemmed from trade liberalization and FDI (Petach 2013). Therefore, the economic losses in military conflicts help to prevent countries that have *McDonald's* franchises from engaging in the conflict.

The global interconnectedness brought about by globalization through economic interdependence, rise of multinational companies and globalization of supply chains symbolized by the growing reach of the GA suggests that business cooperation is always more rewarding than armed conflict (Altinors 2016). However, the theory is not absolute because it covers only one aspect of globalization and there should be counter examples. Yet, it sets up a positive relationship between globalization and decreasing conflict.

CI: Through multiple channels states and societies are interconnected, reducing the priority of using military force

CI's fundamental assumption is that states and societies are embedded in a complex network of channels and connections which are not restricted to military and political ones. This results in an intricate entanglement or dependence of nations that minimizes the relevance or superiority of power and security issues in international relations. Nations engage in transnational relationships in the form of trade, investments, communication, cultural relations, tourism, and diplomatic and military alliances (Oatley 2019). These numerous relations lead to the formation of complicated dependencies. Because there are several linkages between states, power and security issues are less dominant in the determination of foreign policy and international relations since there is so much interdependence if not interconnection. This interdependence results in the involvement of other non-state

actors – MNCs, NGOs, activist groups among them which reduces state hegemony in international relations (Keohane & Nye 2000).

Multiple linkages also make states exposed to failure in one segment (trade, finance, etc.) affect the others via the web of interconnections. This makes them equally vulnerable in a way that influences the behavior of states. Thus, CI implies that military power is not important due to numerous connections which make states adaptive to one another's needs and to non-state international forces.

Objectives of the study

It has been identified that since the time of partition, the main issues that have characterized Pakistan and India relations are historical conflicts, unsettled issues of territory, terrorism, nationalism, religious radicalism, and disputes over the resources that have culminated in the relationship of hostility, mistrust and suspicion between the two nuclear powers (Panda 2013). Efforts made towards the achievement of peace and the return to normalcy in relations have not been completely effective so far.

Therefore, the objectives of the study that authors have come up include; (a) to investigate the idea of 'Golden Arches Effect', or perceived peace between countries that do not go to war with each other if they both have *McDonald's* outlets, as far as Pakistan and India link is concerned; (b) as the first step, authors propose to examine whether the *McDonaldization* process of Pakistan and Indian economies has deepened to contribute to or even complicate the two countries' economic entanglement; (c) to find the drawbacks and criticism to the use of the GA theory to describe and understand roles that economic interdependence plays in IR and conflict; and (d) to bring fresh facts, arguments, studies to the development of the GA theory and the CI theory for the tendencies and potential of Pakistan-India relations and their peace.

Results and discussion

McDonaldization is the notion that distinctive characteristics of fast-food restaurants such as efficiency, a calculable approach, and predictability and control, form the basis for the increased rationalization of more sides of society. About consequences on economies, we have possibilities, i.e. more tendencies to oligopolist, globalization, and a shift of emphasis from qualitative diversification to such values as the financial result.

Both India and Pakistan have seen the emergence of increased 'westernization' in terms of fast-food restaurant such as *Burger King*, *KFC*, *MacDonald's* and so on and shopping malls. To the extent this means the principles underpinning McDonaldization are being applied to certain sectors of the retail and service industries in the developing world, there is evidence that this acts to plug the economies of these nations into the globalization processes. However, the exact meaning and extent of this varies from country to country and from sector to sector.

The economic relations between the countries are diversified and concern competition as well as cooperation. For example, they are having conflicting stands and past towards Kashmir but increasing annual business barriers crossing billions of dollars every year. In this respect, McDonaldization is likely to strengthen links to world networks but may not help and settle conflicts between the countries in question. Therefore, the findings include the following critical propositions:

1. GA seems an over-simplified fashion for understanding the various causes that can make or break war or peace between nations. The conflict between Pakistan and India is historical, territorial, religious and nationalistic however the existence or absence of *McDonald's* does not explain.
2. GA theory is overly preoccupied with *McDonald's* style formal corporate economic relations. It omits structureless business relations and common linkages of countries like Pakistan and India even during the worst times. Therefore, the existence of something like *McDonald's* may tell us extraordinarily little about interdependence uniformly.
3. GA theory pays scant attention to the effects that politics have on international relations and the numerous signs of insecurity that often overrule economic rationality and give rise to conflict. For instance, Pakistan-India economic cooperation has improved in the last twenty years with trade and investment, common regional interests or prospects for peace and cooperation yet find themselves struggling with issues of Kashmir, terrorism, security, domestic politics, nationalism, competitions and rivalry.
4. GA theory has conceptual problems, such as (a) it has a limited economic focus, (b) it underestimates the political element, and (c) it provides no straightforward linkage between economic integration and warfare. GA has lesser ability to explain the more than existential

political animosity between two South Asian giants Pakistan and India despite increasing economic interaction in the last decade.

CI applications to international relations

CI is a realization of the multifaceted global interconnection of societies from diplomatic diplomacy to social and illicit activities. It stresses non-state actors, international institutions, and multinational corporations as the major forms of interaction. However, it also postulates how exchanges between different societies lead to increased interaction and appreciation of the cultures across different territories despite the occasional conflict resulting from nationalists (Braddon 2012; Farrell & Newman 2019; Oatley 2019). In general, it highlights how the current trends of increased globalization through multilateral trade and social interconnectedness may lead to improved international cooperation.

CI connection to Golden Arches Theory

The GA theory incorporates some aspects of CI (Table1) in explaining how the spread of MNCs and their economic interactions bring societies together for mutual benefits and hence enhances stability and cultural interchange to become Economic-Peace Nexus (Pathak & Baibourtian 2024), on the condition that the political underpinnings include liberal democracies.

Table 1. GA–CI interactions and differences

Feature	Theory of Golden Arches (GA)	Theory of Complex Interdependence (CI)	Economic Peace Nexus (Interactions)
Focus	Economic ties via multinational corporations (MNCs) like McDonald's	Multiple channels: diplomatic, economic, social, cultural, etc.	Both stress global economic ties as essential to stability.
Scope	Primarily economic, focused on middle-class societies	Broad scope: includes political, economic, cultural dimensions	CI has a broader focus while GA focuses narrowly on MNCs.
Main Actors	States, MNCs (like <i>McDonald's</i>)	States, non-state actors (NGOs, international organizations)	Both consider the role of economic entities in global stability.
Role of Military Force	Military force becomes less relevant in countries with economic ties	Interdependence reduces the use of force due to cooperation	Both argue that economic interdependence lessens conflict risks.
Assumptions	Middle-class societies with access to globalization resist conflict	Interdependence across multiple levels reduces security risks	Both see economic integration as a deterrent to conflict.
Criticism	Overfocus on correlation between <i>McDonald's</i> and peace	Overestimates the degree to which interdependence prevents conflicts	Both theories may overlook the persistence of non-economic conflicts.

Globalization	Symbolized by <i>McDonald's</i> presence in various countries	Defined as complex economic, political, and social integration	Both see globalization as a key factor in international stability.
Limitations	Does not account for civil wars or conflicts in MNC-hosting nations	Focuses less on national security threats, more on interdependence	GA focuses on consumerism; CI on multidimensional interdependence.

However, CI gives a more correct and detailed picture of globalization, which states that globalization entails conflict over a single point, instead of conflict and cooperation through many points. It offers a more comprehensive framework for understanding the nature of globalization in its many-faceted form.

The Case of Pakistan–India relations

The Symbolism of McDonald's

McDonaldization in Pakistan and India was achieved in the 1990s with the establishment of the first *McDonald's* restaurant which was considered as the proof that the country opened its doors to foreign investment and globalization after a long time of isolation.

In Pakistan, *McDonald's* opened first restaurant in Lahore, and it was established on 19 September 1998 (Knutsson 2007; Mcdonalds 2024). For many middle-class Pakistanis particularly the youth *McDonalds* was, and still is, a symbol of status going with the western lifestyle depicted in the movies and television series. Consuming food at that place was a sign that you were a refined elite, cosmopolitan, and a global citizen. The homogenization of *McDonald's* experiences also gave one the feeling of being linked to individuals in other countries consuming the same foods.

In the same way, the opening of *McDonald's* on 13 October 1996 in New Delhi after waiting a long time to enter in India (Knutsson 2007; Shilkar 2015), indicates that the government of India was now ready to allow foreign brands and companies to invest in the country. *McDonald's* became a symbol of status for the emerging middle class through consumption of fast foods although it faced a lot of difficulties and resistance from fundamentalist Hindus (*McDonald's* in India 2015). The brand emerged as a metaphor for India's globalization.

Other fast foods originating from USA such as *Pizza Hut*, *KFC* and *Subway* have also opened branches in major Indian and Pakistani cities over the past two decades. These global brands have been adopted by the rising middle classes as emissaries of modernity and affluence.

Aspirational consumers have also been targeted by western fashion brands. *Nike*, *Levi's* and *Zara* are perceived as modern and trendy than the local brands. Stores of these international fashion brands have appeared for the consumers to openly consume the brands' iconography and aesthetic. These multinational companies have also had to make corresponding changes and start aligning their products to the local culture. For instance, *McDonald's* in India neither sells beef (as Hindus do not consume beef) nor pork (as of Muslims do not consume pork) because of cultural constraints and offers more vegetarian products. Brand menus also contain spicier, and chili flavors than global flavors.

The use of brands such as *McDonald's* shows how Pakistani and Indians have ambivalent feelings toward globalization and westernization. From the perspective of policymakers, letting major foreign brands in operation gives confidence in integration and competitively competing in the international market. It widens emerging consumer markets for managers, executives, and other relevant professionals. And for the emerging middle classes, it answers the call for the global, cosmopolitan, and international lifestyle and belonging to international and global communities while being culturally localized (Knutsson 2007). They thus have considerable symbolic importance in these countries during social and economic upheavals.

State of economic relations

Official trade relations have been weak owing to political differences, and there has been little actual trade. However, trade has also been done indirectly through third parties. Major traded products include cotton, chemicals, spices etc.

Investment relations are also restricted though few Indian giants like *Tata*, *Reliance*, *Dabur India*, etc. are having their business ventures in Pakistan (Mahanta & Kumar 2003). Likewise, there are a few Pakistani companies that exist in India. "Top brand *Bareeze*, known for its famous embroidery and cotton fabric, already has two stores in New Delhi. But other leading brands like *Junaid Jamshed*, a famous singer-turned-religious activist's store for men and women, *Leisure Club*, *Man*, *Urban Culture*, *Sefam*, *The Working Women*, *Chinyere* and *Shahnameh* are new to the Indian shores" (Ashiq 2012) and some pharmaceutical companies (BR Web Desk 2024).

Globalization has led to increased economic integration between the two economies. Despite the barriers that exist within the two economies, bilateral trade has gradually increased over the years to about \$2 billion (Shaheen et al. 2023). The figure for indirect trade, on the other hand, is likely to be significantly higher. This is evidence of increasing economic integration. MCB Bank and United Bank Ltd. from Pakistan have received help from the liberalization of FDI policies in India. Investment interest remains intact despite political rivalry between the two nations.

The expansion of IT has allowed for a free flow of information and ideas that has promoted better people to people contacts, especially among the young generations. This could help build constituencies that would support peace, cooperation, and economic development. Moreover, business activities of multinationals (BR Web Desk 2024) such as *Unilever*, *Nestle*, etc., have their operations across the border of India and Pakistan making them the key initiators of economic integration among the two nations in aspects such as production, trade, and exchange of ideas among other factors.

Trade climate can however improve access through land, sea and air transport facilitated by globalization if relations between the two countries are friendly and relations are normalized. Although political rivalry is still a barrier, but economic interdependence has interconnected the economies of India and Pakistan through trade, investment and business relations (Ali et al. 2015; Shaheen et al. 2023). Such interdependence can potentially help to drop political constraints and contribute to the process of stabilizing the situation in the region.

India and Pakistan have upgraded their economic relations and have started encouraging more trade and commerce between them although economic interdependence has not precipitated any major changes in the military sphere (Ali et al. 2015; Shaheen et al. 2023). Political rivalry and unresolved issues like security remain the major components of strategic thinking in both countries. Military establishments therefore differentiate economic priorities from defense and security priorities.

Political and military ties

Pakistan and India, both South Asian neighbors, share a history of enmity, wars and conflicts mainly because of disputed borders and socio-political rivalry (Khan 2007). The historical conflicts between

the two show challenging interstate relations and remain to be one of the most challenging geostrategic issues in South Asia that must be addressed to achieve greater regional stability (Ahmad 2016; Chaudhri 2016; Lyon 2008; Mitra 2001). Although the manifest wars have been halted due to the application of deterrents, the search for peace in the region is still a delicate process in conflict resolution (Dixit 2002; Hagerty 2005). Both countries have fought several wars starting from the very day of their inception.

1947 War (pre-McDonaldization)

Began in October 1947, following the partition and the attainment of independence from British subjection with a dispute on the territory of Jammu & Kashmir as both countries claimed their authority over the state (Wirsing 1998; Wint 1967). The war led to India possessing most of the region of Kashmir, while Pakistan possessing a rather small part, and the division was followed by the ceasefire facilitated by the United Nations with no final decision on the status of the territory made (Barua 2011; Schofield & Victoria 2003).

1965 War (pre-McDonaldization)

It begun in August 1965 because of the tensions and border problems after the 1947 war, lasted for five weeks with some operations including use of artillery, armor and infantry (Barua 2011). It reached a standstill and was followed by a ceasefire brokered by the Soviet Union at the end of September 1965 (Pike 2000).

1971 War (pre-McDonaldization)

It began in November 1971 with Pakistan first attacking Indian airfields. The war accelerated with India on the better side because of the struggle for independence in East Pakistan now Bangladesh. The war lasted thirteen days and ended with the surrender of Pakistan forces in the east which led to the formation of Bangladesh (Barua 2011; Conboy 2012; Pike 2000).

Kargil War 1999 (post-McDonaldization)

Kargil War started in May 1999, in the post-McDonaldization era, in which Pakistani troops captured vital heights on the Indian side of Kargil (Lavoy 2009; Lyon 2008). It spanned close to three months with heavy fighting along the mountain terrains at high altitudes. Geographically, Pakistan was at a tactical disadvantage because the nature of terrain in Kargil was difficult to predict. The outcome of Kargil War was a return of the status quo (Nanda 1999).

However, Kargil War presents a clear case of two countries, which have McDonald's outlets, involved in violent conflict contrary to GA theory. After the Kargil War, some political scientists claimed that GA was a minimalistic way of looking at geo-politics and the effects of economic integration while elements such as nationalism, the issue of territory, and political concerns can supersede economic gains for nations.

Several factors make the Kargil War an example of the theory's inapplicability. First, Pakistan and India's long-standing animosity has a historical, territorial and political foundations, having to do with the disputed territory of Kashmir. Such problems are not strictly within the sphere of economic cooperation, as national security and state borders are many a time valued more than economic relations. Second, GA takes for granted the capability of middle-class consumerism while South Asia is a geostrategic region where political and military factors overshadow the economic ones.

Shifts in military strategies

In all these wars conventional tactics involving the use of large numbers of infantry and armored formations with support from artillery and aerial bombardments were often used. But this fact was overshadowed during the Kargil War, when the challenges of mountain warfare came into the light.

The conflicts led to the loss of many lives and the misuse and wastage of economic capital. They showed fear and enmity but concurrently brought the countries to the brink of understanding the risks of shifting to the nuclear level. This helped occasionally to lower tensions and promote the holding of dialogues between the two parties (Shaheen et al. 2023).

Nevertheless, the territorial issues and disagreement have still been alive in destabilizing the region further. Small-scale fighting has persisted along borders, along with provocative government statements and nationalist sentiments. The buildup of conventional and nuclear deterrence also is still in place on both sides (Kampani 2002).

Nuclear deterrence

Nuclear weapons brought nuclear deterrence and restraint between Pakistan and India. The possibility of an uncontrollable transition to a conventional conflict is now recognized by both parties and influences crisis regulation (Kapur 2007; Shaheen et al. 2023). Yet, neither has

ceased to develop new generation nuclear warheads and means of their delivery.

Conventional military capabilities

Biased force ratios had led Pakistan to focus on coercive measures due to the asymmetrical distribution of forces (Lavoy 2009). As the conventional balance changed in Pakistan’s favor it has shifted its military strategy to focus on calibrated offense, under the nuclear umbrella. India is gradually shifting toward a two-front war construct that involves China and Pakistan. Strategic reach, long range precision munitions, space, and cyberspace are other domains of conventional capability development for India along with modernization of forces. The 2016 (Correspondent 2016; Miglani & Hashim 2016; Masood 2016) and 2019 cross-border surgical airstrikes in Pakistani territory marked the initiation of India’s pre-emptive strategy against Pakistan (Desk 2019).

Thus, although economic concerns have increased for both countries, security competition and a lack of resolution to conflicts continue the strategic rivalry (Kampani 2002) (Figure 4 & Figure 5). This is also evident through the defense budgets of both countries (Figure 2 & Figure 3).

Figure 3. Conceptual framework

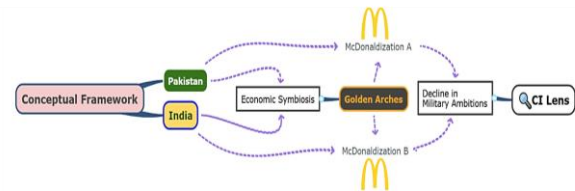


Figure 4. Pakistan military spending / Defense budget 1960-2024 (Macrotrends n.d.)

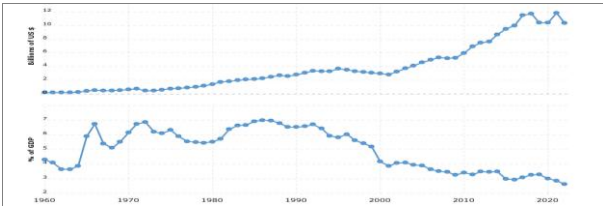
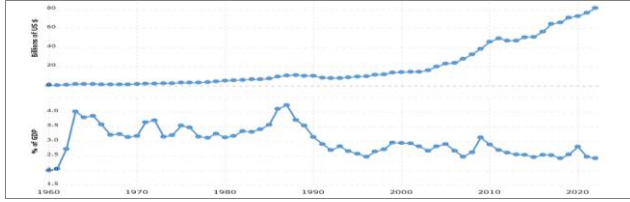


Figure 57. Indian military spending /Defense budget 1960-2024(Macrotrends, n.d.)



Nuclear capabilities affect conventional military choices but there is ongoing modernization of conventional forces following novel approaches to war.

Conclusions

The GA theory shows the connection between the expansion of globalization, capitalism and democracy with the peace between countries. However, its application has been criticized in the context of relationship between South Asian states particularly India and Pakistan. Thus, the authors have produced the following observations:

- The GA theory is tackling difficulties in the context of the relations between India and Pakistan.
- The economic integration between the two countries has been gradually deepening, but hostile relations have not stopped.
- It is seen that cultural, historical, and religious differences have reduced economic relations.
- Some of the unresolved problems are still the cause of disagreement, i.e., the Kashmir dispute, cross-border terrorism.
- Military escalations have continued despite the existence of *McDonald's*, which according to the theory should not be the case.
- This Kargil conflict showed that *McDonald's* did not become a barrier to the War.
- During 2001-2002 India-Pakistan standoff period there was mobilization despite commercial activities.
- The 2008 Mumbai terror attacks affected state-level business relationships and contracts when India blamed Pakistan.
- Cross-border airstrikes in 2016 and 2019 only worsened hostility while providing no aid to economic cooperation.
- Moreover, minimized entertainment ties between India and Pakistan indicate that there are still strategic and political barriers to bilateral relations.

Despite such an evolution of economic cooperation, which may slightly contribute to the improvement of relations, the acute issues

remain. Thus, GA may have limited generalizability in view of the history of warfare as political preparedness to address strategic conflicts, remains essential in addition to economic exchange. Interdependencies have not been fully accompanied by a decrease in security threats in South Asia. Political factors are a dominant force over and above simple economic considerations, thus restricting the validity of the GA theory. Addressing of core issues is needed to support any peace benefits from business relations as stated and emphasized by the notions of CI.

Thus, although it is a new theory, GA has its weaknesses in altering the political, ethnic, historical, and economic factors of inter and intra-state modern conflicts. The message conveyed by it is that the power of the 'Big Mac' cannot bar all the sources of violence and warfare in the world.

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