

Psycholinguistic Patterns of Security Narratives: International Relations Students and the Role of Pakistan Army in South Waziristan

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Abstract

Since 9/11, South Waziristan has remained a turbulent region plagued by militancy, illicit economies, and fragile governance both before and after its merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). The Pakistan Army has played a central role in tackling these challenges through counter-insurgency operations, securitised governance, and reconstruction measures aimed at restoring stability and state authority. This paper examines the diverse narratives articulated by International Relations students hailing from South Waziristan but studying in leading Pakistani higher education institutions. These students construct comparative perceptions of the Pakistan Army's socio-ethical interventions in South Waziristan in relation to the performance of other militaries globally in addressing similar insurgency-driven contexts. The recent literature provides a backdrop for interpreting student discourses. Findings show that compared with international cases—including Peru, Colombia, Algeria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Turkey, and the Philippines—local intellectuals and students appreciate the Pakistan Army's effectiveness in stabilising South Waziristan, thereby assisting in investigating how securitised governance reshapes identity, legitimacy, and future governance pathways in Pakistan's frontier regions.

Keywords: Dera Ismail Khan, Plan Colombia, Algeria Civil War, Afghan War, discourse analysis, FATA-KP merger

Introduction

Since 9/11, South Waziristan has remained a focal point of militancy, illicit cross-border economies, and fragile governance, shaped significantly by the spillover of instability from Afghanistan (Chalk, 2007). Militants linked with Al-Qaeda and the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) embedded themselves in the region, using porous borders to move weapons and fighters. Operation Al-Mizan (2002–2006) was among the first attempts to clear the area, but it met stiff resistance from insurgents. Cross-border influences from Afghanistan further intensified challenges, especially after the U.S.-led intervention in 2001, which displaced militants into Pakistan's tribal areas. Suicide attacks, targeted killings, and extortion became widespread, eroding local trust in both state institutions and traditional tribal governance. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) surged, especially during large-scale operations like Rah-e-Nijat in 2009. The fragile socioeconomic environment was worsened by illicit trade, arms smuggling, and weak administrative control. Even after the merger of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) in 2018, legacies of underdevelopment and instability persisted (Khan, 2012).

The Pakistan Army has been vital in addressing these layered challenges through counter-insurgency operations, securitised governance, and reconstruction projects. Operation Zarb-e-Azb in 2014 represented a turning point, dismantling militant safe havens in North and South Waziristan (Khan & Khan, 2022). The military facilitated the phased return of IDPs, rebuilt road infrastructure, and established cantonments to ensure security continuity. Post-merger, governance reforms followed the 25th Constitutional Amendment (2018), enabling the extension of police and judiciary into the region (Senate of Pakistan, 2019). Army-led development projects included schools, healthcare centres, and roads linking Wana with Tank and Dera Ismail Khan, aimed at integrating South Waziristan into mainstream Pakistan. Before the merger, the army functioned as both security guarantor and interim administrator, while after the merger, it supported provincial authorities in establishing civilian governance. These interventions reduced violence, but questions regarding sustainability and civilian empowerment remain. The dual role of kinetic force and reconstruction thus defines Pakistan's securitisation approach in the borderlands (Khan & Khan, 2022).

This study situates South Waziristan within a comparative global framework where militaries assume central roles in governance during insurgency. Peru's confrontation with Sendero Luminoso in the 1980s and 1990s demonstrated how military-led counter-insurgency eroded democratic institutions. Colombia's Plan Colombia (1999–2008) revealed the securitisation of illicit coca economies under military control (Khan & Asim, 2025). Algeria's civil war in the 1990s showed how prolonged securitised governance restricted pluralism. Afghanistan (2001–2021) illustrated fragility when military dominance was not matched by institutional capacity, culminating in collapse. Iraq after 2003 displayed how militarisation institutionalised sectarian politics (Khan & Asim, 2025). In contrast, Indonesia's post-2005 Aceh settlement illustrated how demilitarisation and institutional redesign could sustain peace. Sri Lanka after 2009 highlighted how military entrenchment constrained civic life.

Turkey's counter-PKK campaigns and the Philippines' 2017 Marawi siege further exemplify how securitisation reshapes politics, identity, and reconstruction. These cases provide the framework for critically assessing Pakistan's experience in South Waziristan (Khan & Asim, 2025).

This research utilises psycholinguistic and cognitive analysis to examine how International Relations students from South Waziristan perceive the Pakistan Army's role compared with other militaries worldwide. The methodology uses semi-structured interviews ($N = 50$) through snowball sampling, engaging students from 13 universities. Anchored in securitisation theory as developed by Ole Wæver in 1993 within the Copenhagen School, this study analyses how security actors construct threats and seek audience acceptance. The framework considers four components: the securitising actor, the existential threat, the referent object, and the audience. Securitisation can span political, economic, societal, and environmental domains. In the case of South Waziristan, militancy and governance fragility were securitised militarily, legitimising expanded army roles in governance and reconstruction. Psycholinguistic analysis deciphers how language patterns reflect perceptions of legitimacy, trust, and authority, while cognitive analysis reveals the mental framing of security narratives. This combined approach captures both the discursive and interpretive dimensions of securitised governance.

Hence, this study first investigates the published literature where the role of the Pakistan Army in the tribal belt, both before and after the merger, has been discussed. The findings provide a foundation by justifying the need for a psycholinguistic and cognitive analysis of perceptions among International Relations students belonging to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This approach enables readers to understand where the Pakistan Army stands in comparison with other militaries across the globe, as well as its credibility among its populace during ongoing fifth-generation warfare.

Literature Review

In *Afghanistan: How the West Lost Its Way*, Bird and Marshall (2011) highlight the collapse of Western strategic clarity in the Afghanistan war, which left border regions like South Waziristan deeply exposed to militancy, drug trafficking, and human smuggling. They emphasise that the porous Durand Line enabled insurgents to operate with ease, financing their campaigns through narcotics while destabilising fragile governance in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Within this vacuum, the Pakistan Army emerged as the key institution confronting insurgency and illicit economies, deploying securitised strategies to restore order. Bird and Marshall also recognise how the Kalashnikov culture and religious radicalisation were deeply entrenched in the region, making counter-insurgency an uphill battle. However, their work highlights that Western disengagement placed Pakistan in a position of responsibility, compelling its military to take charge of state-building tasks in South Waziristan. What remains absent in their account is a psycholinguistic and cognitive analysis

of how local populations, particularly educated youth, perceive the Army's dual role as both a security guarantor and a socio-political engineer.

The limitations of Western narratives are further exposed by Williams (2011) in *Afghanistan Declassified: A Guide to America's Longest War*, which illustrates how fragmented intelligence and selective securitisation of threats ignored the complexities of borderland governance. Williams argues that counter-terrorism was framed in technical terms while human security concerns such as illicit economies, sectarian radicalisation, and ethno-linguistic expansionism were downplayed. This neglect strengthened non-state actors who exploited gaps in governance across Waziristan and adjacent Afghan provinces. As the United States oscillated between engagement and withdrawal, Pakistan's security forces assumed increasing responsibility for containing insurgency and suppressing anti-state narratives. Williams observes that in regions like South Waziristan, the Army was not only combating militancy but also managing the cultural politics of identity through securitised governance. This analysis reinforces Bird and Marshall's (2011) conclusion that Pakistan's military dominance was structurally inevitable. Even so, Williams does not consider how local intellectuals and students internalise, interpret, or critique these developments—a gap that justifies psycholinguistic and cognitive investigation.

In *Inside Al-Qaeda and the Taliban: Beyond Bin Laden and 9/11*, Shahzad (2011) shifts focus from Western mismanagement to the evolution of militant networks deeply rooted in tribal regions. Shahzad documents how South Waziristan became a recruitment and operational hub for transnational jihadist movements, with drug trafficking, human smuggling, and illicit economies sustaining militant resilience. He highlights the Pakistan Army's counter-insurgency operations as pivotal in dismantling safe havens but also notes that such operations often strained relations with local tribes by undermining traditional governance structures. This militarised dominance altered patterns of political behaviour, gradually replacing tribal authority with state-centric control. Shahzad shows how insurgency in Waziristan linked directly with global jihadist narratives, entangling Pakistan's security in international counter-terrorism frameworks. His detailed empirical observations complement Williams (2011) by revealing how securitisation extended into cultural and religious domains. Nevertheless, his work falls short of analysing how students and intellectuals interpret these transformations in language, cognition, and discourse.

The regional dimension is sharpened in *Pakistan Before and After Osama* by Gul (2012), where the author situates Pakistan's military operations within the wider context of counter-terrorism after bin Laden's death. Gul examines South Waziristan as a frontline zone where the Army confronted insurgency tied to drug trafficking, militancy, and sectarian radicalisation. He argues that Pakistan's securitisation policies were necessary to prevent cross-border instability from overwhelming national cohesion. At the same time, Gul highlights the contradictions of military dominance, as efforts to suppress anti-state narratives often curtailed democratic space and reinforced militarised nationalism. This observation links directly with Shahzad's (2011) analysis of how securitisation reshaped tribal authority

into state-approved identity politics. Gul acknowledges the Pakistan Army's effectiveness in containing militancy but remains cautious about the long-term legitimacy of securitised governance. What he does not address is how educated youth, particularly International Relations students from Waziristan, process these competing realities through their own cognitive and linguistic frames.

Further contextualisation is provided in *The Pakistan Paradox: Instability and Resilience* by Jaffrelot (2016), which explores Pakistan's enduring oscillation between fragility and adaptability. Jaffrelot identifies South Waziristan as a laboratory of securitisation where the Army suppressed insurgency, controlled illicit economies, and restructured governance. He shows that while political instability is chronic, Pakistan has displayed resilience through its military's capacity to impose order in crisis zones. Yet this resilience came at the cost of weakening civilian institutions and reinforcing sectarian and ethno-linguistic divides. Jaffrelot's account resonates with Gul's (2012) analysis of militarised nationalism but situates it within a broader historical continuum of civil-military imbalance. The emphasis on the Army's institutional dominance in shaping political culture aligns with the argument that South Waziristan's governance has been securitised into a militarised framework. Though, as with earlier works, the perspectives of students and local intellectuals remain unaddressed, strengthening the case for psycholinguistic and cognitive approaches.

A more recent perspective emerges in *Afghanistan War* by Carlisle (2022), which revisits the long war with an updated focus on its regional consequences. Carlisle highlights how the geopolitical instability of Afghanistan perpetually spilled over into South Waziristan, magnifying challenges of drug trafficking, insurgency, and human security. He emphasises that Pakistan's military acted as a buffer not only for national security but also for international stability, especially during NATO's inconsistent presence. Carlisle draws attention to the fragility of developmental frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in border regions, where securitisation overrode developmental priorities. This observation connects to Jaffrelot's (2016) paradox of resilience, showing how Pakistan's Army maintained control but compromised civic inclusion. Carlisle's work strengthens the argument that securitisation becomes both a necessity and a trap in managing South Waziristan. However, the absence of cognitive-linguistic analysis of how security narratives are internalised by educated youth leaves an important gap for this study to address.

Finally, *Violence and Resistance in Pakistan* by Leghari (2025) brings the discussion into the contemporary era by analysing how cycles of insurgency and securitisation continue to shape Pakistan's frontier governance. Leghari emphasises that South Waziristan exemplifies the securitisation of drug trafficking, human smuggling, ethno-linguistic radicalisation, and anti-state propaganda. She notes that the Pakistan Army's dominance has restructured political identity, subordinating tribal authority to state-centred nationalism. This mirrors Carlisle's (2022) concern with human security and Jaffrelot's (2016) paradox of resilience, yet with greater attention to the socio-linguistic dimensions of narrative construction. Leghari argues that securitisation has entrenched militarised governance, but also left society vulnerable to

legitimacy crises in the absence of inclusive political dialogue. Her work explicitly highlights the importance of discourses in shaping perceptions, though it does not empirically analyse how students interpret these dynamics. This lacuna underscores the value of psycholinguistic and cognitive analysis in capturing perceptions of the Army's role in South Waziristan.

Research Methodology

This study utilizes psycholinguistic and cognitive analysis to examine how International Relations students from South Waziristan perceive the role of the Pakistan Army, both before and after the region's merger with KP. The decision to use psycholinguistic and cognitive methods is grounded in the securitisation theory of the Copenhagen School, developed by Ole Wæver (Taureck, 2006). Securitisation theory conceptualises security as a discursive process where actors identify existential threats, present them as requiring extraordinary measures, and seek legitimacy from an audience. In South Waziristan, militancy, radicalisation, and fragile governance have been securitised to justify military predominance in political and social domains (Chalk, 2007). Psycholinguistic analysis allows researchers to uncover how language structures—choice of words, metaphors, and discursive strategies—disclose deeper perceptions of legitimacy and authority. Cognitive analysis complements this by exploring how students mentally frame security, stability, and governance when reflecting on military interventions (Tenbrink, 2020). Together, these approaches allow an understanding of both what students say and the intellectual patterns shaping their judgments.

To gather empirical data, this research relies on semi-structured interviews with a sample size of 50 students ($N = 50$). Respondents were recruited through snowball sampling to ensure access to individuals from South Waziristan currently studying in 13 of Pakistan's leading higher education institutions. These include Quaid-i-Azam University (Islamabad), University of Peshawar, Abasyn University (Peshawar), City University (Peshawar), National University of Modern Languages (Islamabad), University of Balochistan (Quetta), International Islamic University Islamabad, Preston University (Islamabad), Qurtaba University (Peshawar), Lahore University of Biological and Applied Sciences (Lahore), Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University (Peshawar), University of Lahore (Lahore), and Lahore Leads University (Lahore).

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as they allow for guiding questions to ensure thematic coverage while giving respondents freedom to express subjective experiences in their own words. The format was particularly effective for capturing psycholinguistic details, such as how students linguistically associate with or distance themselves from securitised narratives of the Pakistan Army. In addition, the semi-structured model enabled further probing when respondents demonstrated strong emotional or cognitive framing. Thus, this design provided structure and flexibility, balancing analytical rigour with contextual sensitivity.

The semi-structured interviews were divided into two core portions:

1. **Descriptive Perceptions:** Questions regarding the role of the Pakistan Army before and after the merger of FATA with KP, the effectiveness of operations such as Rah-e-Nijat and Zarb-e-Azb, and the military's contribution to reconstruction, education, and healthcare.
2. **Comparative Perspectives:** Reflections on the role of other militaries globally, including Colombia, Algeria, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Iraq, and Indonesia. Key guiding questions included:
 - *"How do you linguistically describe the Pakistan Army's role in South Waziristan?"*
 - *"What metaphors or expressions come to mind when you discuss security and development in your region?"*
 - *"How do you compare the army's role with other militaries worldwide engaged in counter-insurgency or post-conflict reconstruction?"*
 - *"Do you perceive securitised governance as strengthening or weakening local identity and governance in South Waziristan?"*

The selection of participants was balanced to ensure representation across South Waziristan's diverse tehsils and tribes. South Waziristan District historically served as the largest tribal agency in the erstwhile FATA, spanning over 6,619 square kilometres. The district was formally merged with KP in 2018 and later divided into Lower and Upper South Waziristan in 2022. Its population is mainly composed of the Ahmadzai Wazir and Mahsud tribes, alongside smaller groups including the Ormur (Burki), Dotani, Sulaimankhel, Ghilji, Khomia, Taji, and Bettani (Imtiaz & Bano, 2025). Representation across tehsils and tribal groups was maintained when recruiting participants (see Table 1).

Table 1

Demographic and Institutional Distribution of Student Participants (N = 50)

Tehsil	Tribe	University / College	n
Birmil	Ahmadzai Wazir	Quaid-i-Azam University (3), University of Peshawar (1), Abasyn University Peshawar (2)	6
Ladha	Mahsud	University of Peshawar (6), City University	7

Tehsil	Tribe	University / College	n
		Peshawar (1)	
Makin	Mahsud	National University of Modern Languages (3), Quaid-i-Azam University (1), University of Balochistan (1)	6
Sararogha	Ormur (Burki / Baraki)	International Islamic University Islamabad (4), University of Balochistan (1)	5
Serwekai	Dotani, Sulaimankhel	Quaid-i-Azam University (2), Preston University Islamabad (1), University of Balochistan (1)	6
Tiarza	Ghilji, Khomia	Abasyn University Peshawar (3), Qurtaba University Peshawar (3), University of Peshawar (1)	7
Toi Khulla	Dotani, Sulaimankhel	University of Peshawar (2), Lahore University of Biological & Applied Sciences (1), International Islamic University Islamabad (2)	5
Wana	Ahmadzai Wazir, Taji	Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University Peshawar (5), University of Lahore (2), Lahore Leads University (1)	8
Total			50

Note. Data compiled by author.

Findings and Discussion

Perceptions by Tehsil

Birmil

Students from Birmil recall that before and after the merger, their region struggled with militancy, lack of infrastructure, and limited access to education. They note that the Pakistan Army addressed safety concerns during operations by removing militant networks and re-establishing the writ of the state. In terms of law and order, their testimonies highlight the return of security checkpoints and curfews, which initially felt restrictive but eventually restored stability. Economic opportunities began to grow after markets reopened, with the army facilitating trade routes. Health services improved through temporary field hospitals, which students saw as a lifeline. Education also expanded as the army supported schools and ensured safe environments for girls to study. In peacebuilding, sports tournaments arranged by the army promoted youth engagement. From a human security perspective, the army contributed to food distribution and shelter for displaced families. Since 2015, alignment with the SDGs became visible in vocational training programmes and women's empowerment drives.

Ladha

Students from Ladha recount how the Mahsud tribe endured severe displacement during counter-terrorism operations from 2009 onwards. They emphasise the Pakistan Army's role in clearing militant strongholds and re-establishing basic governance. Security was the foremost priority, which gave space to reopening schools and markets. Human security pillars were addressed through health campaigns, vaccination drives, and rebuilding of clinics. Economically, roads linking Ladha to Tank and Dera Ismail Khan brought trade back. Post-merger, while political disappointment persists due to slow civilian governance, the army remains credited for peace. They also stress that sports events and youth forums supported by the military promoted confidence and countered radicalisation.

Makin

Students from Makin narrate the long years when Mahsud families faced displacement and insecurity. They point to military operations that dismantled militant camps as a turning point for safety. Law and order was restored through monitoring of entry points and facilitation of jirga-based dispute resolutions. Economically, they highlight assistance in re-establishing local bazaars and creating small-scale employment schemes. Health services were reintroduced through mobile clinics, while in education, the army provided teachers in areas where civilian staff were absent. In the sphere of peace, students recall national sports competitions in which Makin youth participated. Since the SDG framework was introduced, sustainable development projects like reforestation and water schemes were initiated.

Sararogha

Ormur students from Sararogha describe their tehsil as once a hub of militant violence. They argue that military operations cleared this threat and enabled gradual returns. Law and order improved as military posts curbed smuggling and restored safe passage. Economically, the rehabilitation of main roads and markets allowed trade to resume. Health services included

vaccination drives and health camps. Education was revitalised by constructing and securing schools. In terms of peace, the army promoted tribal harmony through dialogue initiatives. From a human security perspective, food security and protection of property rights were ensured during repatriations. SDG-linked initiatives like clean drinking water schemes were also introduced.

Serwekai

Students from Serwekai stress that their locality suffered from both insurgency and underdevelopment. They credit the Pakistan Army with providing security by neutralising militant groups and reopening routes to other tehsils. Law and order was re-established by dismantling checkpoints operated by insurgents. Economic activities grew as markets revived. Health interventions were crucial during return phases, with temporary hospitals saving lives. Educational initiatives included rebuilding schools and supporting student scholarships. In peacebuilding, youth forums and tribal gatherings facilitated by the army reduced inter-tribal conflict.

Tiarza

Students from Tiarza explain how their tehsil was heavily affected by insurgency, with schools and markets destroyed. They argue that the Pakistan Army restored safety through counter-terrorism operations. Law and order was strengthened by setting up secure checkpoints and curtailing illegal activities. Economically, roads and bridges constructed under army facilitation reconnected Tiarza with major towns. Educational recovery included reconstruction of destroyed schools and safer environments for female students. In the context of peace, sports festivals created a sense of unity among youth.

Toi Khulla

Students from Toi Khulla stress that their locality was deeply marginalised even before militancy took hold. They highlight that the army restored safety by eliminating armed groups. Law and order measures included policing roads and strengthening security posts. Economic activities grew after markets reopened under military supervision. Health was addressed through immunisation campaigns and field clinics. Educational reforms included rebuilding girls' schools destroyed during violence.

Wana

Students from Wana, the headquarters of South Waziristan, emphasise that their region bore the brunt of both insurgency and governance challenges. They credit the Pakistan Army for restoring safety and reclaiming Wana from militant control. Law and order was re-established through strategic checkpoints and collaboration with local elders. Economic revitalisation occurred with the reopening of Wana Bazaar, the largest in South Waziristan. Health services improved through army hospitals and mobile medical camps. Education flourished as schools and colleges were reopened with security protection.

Comparative Perspectives and Global Lessons

The accounts of students demonstrate how their lived realities intertwine with comparative international cases. Their academic training in International Relations equips them to contextualise the Pakistan Army's interventions against broader military experiences globally:

- **Birmil (vs. Afghanistan & Northeast India):** Students argue that while the Afghan National Army disintegrated in 2021 despite NATO funding, the Pakistan Army retained cohesion, ensuring phased returns of IDPs. Comparatively, in Nagaland and Mizoram, heavy Indian Army presence often alienated locals through the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA). In Birmil, the army facilitated roads, education, and women's literacy centres, avoiding long-term alienation.
- **Ladha (vs. Turkey, Algeria, & Manipur):** Students note that Turkish security forces repressed the PKK but alienated Kurdish society through exclusionary politics, while Algeria's civil war delayed democratic institutions. In contrast, they believe the Pakistan Army paved the way for political inclusion post-merger.
- **Makin (vs. Algeria, Iraq, & Mizoram):** Students argue that Iraq after 2003 shows how dismantling military structures allowed militias to thrive. Pakistan preserved institutions while seeking reintegration through dialogue and post-merger representation.
- **Sararogha (vs. Sri Lanka, Nagaland, & Aceh):** Students observe that Sri Lanka's defeat of the LTTE created peace without reconciliation. By contrast, Sararogha experienced elements of Indonesia's Aceh model, where the army allowed traditional jirgas to function and facilitated gradual reintegration.
- **Serwekai (vs. Colombia, Assam, & Afghanistan):** Colombia's Plan Colombia militarised drug economies, producing resentment without alternatives. Serwekai's Dotani and Sulaimankhel tribes witnessed the army fencing smuggling routes while supporting small business initiatives.
- **Tiarza (vs. Philippines, Sri Lanka, & Manipur):** Students compare their region to the 2017 Marawi siege in the Philippines, where reconstruction dragged on. Tiarza experienced better sequencing: security operations were followed by prompt reconstruction of infrastructure.
- **Toi Khulla (vs. Iraq & Aceh):** Students stress that Iraq's post-2003 institutional collapse created sectarian militias. In Toi Khulla, state institutions were preserved, avoiding sectarian fragmentation.

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- **Wana (vs. Aceh, Northeast India, & Afghanistan):** Wana students believe their region avoided Nagaland's alienation and Afghanistan's collapse by moving towards constitutional inclusion after the FATA-KP merger.

Evaluation of Pakistan's Security and Rehabilitation Framework

Semi-structured interviews revealed nuanced student evaluations regarding the evolution of counter-insurgency and development strategies across the tehsils:

- **Birmil:** Students noted that law enforcement strengthening significantly improved security. By 2025, literacy indicators in Birmil rose above 55% compared to 22% in 2001. Female students mentioned women's literacy programmes supported by military-NGO collaboration.
- **Ladha:** Students appreciated that Frontier Corps units were equipped with modern operational systems. Reopening of schools by 2015 led to enrolment jumping 40% compared to pre-merger statistics, with literacy reaching 47% by 2025.
- **Makin:** Girls' enrolment rose from 8% in 2005 to 28% in 2025. However, students reflected critically on the slow pace of agricultural rehabilitation due to landmines.
- **Sararogha:** Reintegration into provincial politics occurred under continued military oversight, with literacy climbing to 52% in 2025.
- **Serwekai:** Literacy rates nearly doubled from 24% (2010) to 48% (2025). Regulation of cross-border trade weakened drug trafficking networks.
- **Tiarza:** Literacy improved to 49% by 2025, and healthcare coverage extended to over 70% of families.
- **Toi Khulla:** Female literacy rose from 10% in 2005 to 34% in 2025, supported by the establishment of educational infrastructure and information regulation.
- **Wana:** Literacy rates jumped from 19% in 2001 to 54% in 2025. Higher education campuses and vocational centres provided a template for borderland stabilization.

Conclusion

"Waziristan is not only a land of mountains and valleys but also of memories, sacrifices and resilience; to understand its people, one must listen to their words, for language is their weapon and their wound." (Wazir, 2019)

Using qualitative discourse analysis via NVivo, the psycholinguistic and cognitive findings synthesize into several primary thematic dimensions:

1. **Protective Metaphors:** Students consistently employed metaphors positioning the Pakistan Army as a "shield" and "pillar" of protection, framing security as a prerequisite for survival and dignity.
2. **Comparative Nuance:** Unlike Plan Colombia or Algeria's prolonged conflict, students noted that Pakistan's approach demonstrated sensitivity to tribal dynamics and avoided deep social rifts by pairing counter-insurgency with development.
3. **Institutional Anchoring:** In contrast to institutional collapse in Afghanistan and post-2003 Iraq, Pakistan anchored tribal reforms within a constitutional framework post-merger.
4. **Reconciliation and Identity:** Rather than relying solely on military force (as observed in Sri Lanka), the military pursued social reconciliation through education, healthcare, and sports. Students described securitised governance as "guarding the essence" of Waziristan's heritage while integrating the region into the national framework.
5. **Psycholinguistic Markers:** Repeated use of terms such as *hope*, *safety*, and *dignity* indicates that security and development are viewed as an integrated expectation from the state.

Overall, International Relations students from South Waziristan perceive securitisation not as a permanent loss of local autonomy, but as a negotiated pathway toward peace, institutional stability, and national integration.

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