

# A NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY FOR PAKISTAN

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## Abstract

*Since its inception, Pakistan has faced multiple internal and external security challenges, but two internal issues namely political and economic instability have cast heavy shadows on its external policy. In the absence of political continuity, dedicated leadership and long-term policy formulation, the country has suffered the most. In the changing geostrategic environment and security milieu, Pakistan needs a comprehensive national security policy on sound footings and futuristic vision with proactive zeal to pursue its desired national security interests/objectives. This needs revamping existing national security structure and decision-making, involvement of academia, think-tanks and strategic community, and sensitization of media.*

**Keywords:** Security Policy, Securitization, Strategic Community, Think-Tanks.

## Introduction

Since the dawn of Westphalian System, states are confronted with hosts of issues and challenges, jeopardizing their national security and sometimes the very survival as a nation. The evolution of state-system and the changing nature of security challenges, from traditional to non-traditional to hybrid, have compelled the decision-makers to formulate long-term strategies. State being the legitimate actor in the international system has the authority to use force, but the emergence of Non-State Actors has severely undermined the global politics. The hierarchy of states in the global structure determines their trans-regional influence. The rise and fall of great powers are manifested in their judicious use of national resources for the attainment of national security objectives. Besides tangible assets of the

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state, the role of leader is crucial to lead, direct and anchor the nation-state. However, the leader has to rely on a strong institutional mechanism, efficient administrative infrastructure and dedicated executioners to perform the role. The existing international hierarchy of states into super/global and major/regional powers highlight the strong influence of leadership and presence of efficient decision-making mechanism. Rise of Japan and Germany devastated during the World War-II, rise of China after 1970s, resurgence of Russia after 2010, and role of Turkey after 1990s, are some of the examples to prove the point.

Since its inception, Pakistan is confronted with multifaceted security challenges. The two fundamental issues remain constant; political/economic insecurity and lack of strong decision-making mechanism to formulate viable long-term policies. Both are corollary to each other; one compliments the other. Barring few exceptional periods, Pakistan could never witness relative calm. In the changing regional/global security environment, Pakistan is confronted with multi-pronged security challenges, which need to be addressed wholesomely and dispassionately. Therefore, this paper endeavors to suggest a national security policy for Pakistan through conceptual/theoretical prism and practical examples by defining national security interests, to suggest a workable national security structure, with role of research/policy think-tanks, strategic community, and sensitization of media.

### **Conceptual/Theoretical Prism**

The debate about national security is crucial in terms of international relations theoretical paradigm. The terms like military policy, defence policy, foreign policy and security policy are being debated without a concrete outcome. At the bottom of hierarchical policy perspective, Military Policy as enunciated by Samuel Huntington<sup>1</sup> is the activities of the state vis-à-vis its armed forces, their progress/development and scope/role, which is purely a professional matter. Whereas defence policy depicted by John Garnett<sup>2</sup> is the territorial defence and protection of its nationals, which involves both military and civil institutions. On the other hand, foreign policy is the activities of the states with other states in the pursuance of national interests summarized by James Rosenau.<sup>3</sup> Foreign policy is at the parallel level with economic policy, education policy and other such policies. Importantly, the debate over dominance between defence and foreign policy has continued. However, on the one hand, small states cannot afford to undermine defence policy; thus, their foreign policy is subservient to defence policy; and on the other hand, a new term security policy is conceived to combine

defence and foreign policy. Stephanie Newman has given the concept of National Security Policy (NSP),<sup>4</sup> which encompasses all activities of the state with all issues confronted by the state. However, it depends on the state, whether NSP dominates all other policies, or the military policy dominates, which depicts the priority of the state. Therefore, this study takes NSP as the key element of entire discussion.

Likewise, the notion of traditional and non-traditional security has narrowed further.<sup>5</sup> Given the prevailing security environment, a state cannot distinguish between the two; in fact, both are complimentary to each other. Also, the kinetic and non-kinetic issues are losing their distinction as separate entities; a state cannot make an exclusive policy without incorporating both. The best depiction of this notion has been given by Paul Kennedy where he explains the relationship between military and economy.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, this study would encompass a comprehensive notion of security; both traditional and non-traditional alike.

The next factor to be considered is national interests, their definition and role in policy making. In simple terms, national interests are the basic needs and demands of the nation; it is reason of the state. Arnold Wolfers,<sup>7</sup> Hans Morgenthau<sup>8</sup> and John Collins<sup>9</sup> have exclusively debated these. Collins' hierarchy of national interests into survival, sovereignty, self-sufficiency, fundamental institutions, and traditions/values best depict these in realist perspective. Unless, the national interests are clearly defined, the policymaking remains inconclusive. Formulation of national interests remains an uphill task; from regime survival to protection of ideology and from state frontiers to economic wellbeing, all are interwoven. However, it is the 'nerve center' of the nation-state that determines the enunciation of national interests. Therefore, formulating consensus national interest of Pakistan has so far remained elusive, which would be endeavored to be covered in this study.

After setting the conceptual/theoretical foundation for this study, the paper now proceeds to more tangible and specific factors.

## **Raison d'être**

Since its inception, Pakistan has faced multifaceted security issues from within and outside. The constant political instability has severely marred the desired long-term policy-making, and economic instability has never allowed the

country to have an independent foreign policy. Perhaps, Pakistan is the only country which faced three-front war, from India, Afghanistan, and from within. The over-emphasis on traditional security threats has been the over-riding concern of the decision-makers. Though India remained a cardinal factor in Pakistan's security calculations, but the issue of Afghanistan in the wake of Soviet invasion was of wrong priorities. Subsequently, the global jihad, menace of terrorism, and extremism/radicalism were the outcome of Pakistan joining the global war on terror. Pakistan met the kinetic challenges with national resolve to launch *Zarb-e-Azab* and *Rad-ul-Fasad*, and other military operations to wipe-out terrorist structure. However, the proxy war on the Pakistani soil and unended actions of the non-state actors aggravated the situation, which still haunts the Pakistani decision-makers.

However, the non-kinetic issues, especially unrepresentative/unpopular regimes have compromised Pakistan's key national interests. Pakistan never came out of the economic strangulations of the international financial institutions and global state actors. The case in question is the Sword of Damocles by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). It has never allowed Pakistan to formulate independent internal and external policies. Subsequent issues of Pakistan being seen through the prism of terrorism, backward/underdeveloped and intolerant society cast serious doubts on Pakistan's ability to carve out its soft image narrative. The menace of corruption, money-laundering, evasion of taxes, the war of mafias adds to the problems.

Moreover, the climate change, agriculture decline, water scarcity, food shortage and host of other issues continued to be neglected in the presence of political illegitimacy, economic mismanagement, and bad governance. These issues never allowed the formulation of long-term, viable and sound policies for the attainment of national interests. This necessitates a comprehensive national security policy with a proactive vision. Although, a half-hearted attempt was made in the past in the shape of National Internal Security Policy,<sup>10</sup> which was aimed at wiping out terrorism and extremism in the country, but it was based on only one prong i.e., internal dimension ignoring the external factors.

## **National Interests/Objectives**

National interest/objectives are the core issues of a state around which the entire policy parameters are gathered. The well-defined national interest/objectives help to articulate the policy direction. Major states of the world have

public enunciation of their national interests/objectives and some states issue annual review of their national security objectives. Interestingly the case of Pakistan is quite different, despite well-articulated security challenges, it lacks publicly documented national interest/objectives. There may be some classified documents available to some special institutes/individuals but no official document or publicly announced national interests/objectives are available. Therefore, based on the known national security challenges and the public statements of important policymakers some of the national interests/objectives are elucidated below.

Besides the fundamental issues of survival, sovereignty, self-sufficiency, national integration, and independent policies; there are four core states vis-à-vis Pakistan's security policy; China, India, Afghanistan, and the US. For Pakistan, China is the primary state in terms of defence, economy and development; therefore, relations with China have grown from 'All Weather Friendship' to 'Iron Brother Friendship.' Thus, China is the state in terms of Pakistan's national security interest. With India, Pakistan wants to maintain good neighborly relations but that is not possible without the resolution of Kashmir issue; therefore, India remains the core state in terms of Pakistan's security challenge. Though Pakistan wants peace and stability in Afghanistan, but it has remained a major security challenge, which haunts policymakers for internal and external dynamics. Despite the US proving to be an unreliable partner, Pakistan still wants to maintain good relations due to the US influence in global political and financial institutions.

Other states, the European Union (EU), Muslim States and Russia are important but peripheral to Pakistan's national security issues. The EU is the major political and economic bloc and one of the largest trading partners of Pakistan. In the Muslim States, Pakistan has traditional strong relations with Iran and the Arab world, but the Iran-KSA rivalry is dragging Pakistan into an unwanted situation; therefore, Pakistan is trying to adopt a strict neutrality and believes in 'positive engagement.' Turkey and Malaysia are new actors, which Pakistan is eager to involve in its political and economic issues. Lastly, Russia has emerged as an influential global player, asserting its influence in many parts of the world, and Pakistan is eager to court it for balancing and enhancing its political and economic progression vis-à-vis the United States.

Internal security issues are the reflection of a state's external policies; an internally strong political and economic state would always follow a proactive foreign policy in pursuance of its national security objectives. Importantly, Pakistan's major security challenges stem from internal political and economic milieu. Pakistan lacks a sustained political and economic stability that is essential for its independent external policy. Terrorism, intolerance, corruption, tax evasion, and ineffective governance, are adding to security woes of Pakistan. Therefore, Pakistan needs sustained political and economic stability, good governance and the national resolve to wipeout terrorism, extremism, and corruption. The government should also inculcate the confidence and trust in the people by devising transparent and viable policies to pay taxes and get involved in nation-building.

The combination of internal and external national security interest/objectives need to be harmonized and articulated into well-defined policy guidelines by the decision makers in the parliament and key national institutions.

## **National Security Structure**

Pakistan has many decision-making bodies, which often overlap in their role and composition, mostly based on Rational Actor Model<sup>11</sup> of an individual nature. The present traditional structure has Prime Minister as the chief executive of the government with cabinet as the highest decision-making body. In the middle, there is Higher Defence Organization (HDO), which mainly composed of men in uniform to deal with defence and military policies. Overlapping this traditional structure is a parallel but complimentary decision-making body namely the National Command Authority (NCA) to deal with decision pertaining to the command and control of strategic assets and composed of both civilian and armed forces personnel.

The highest decision-making body vis-à-vis national security is the Defence Committee of the Cabinet (DCC), which was renamed in 2013 as Cabinet Committee on National Security (CCNS). It is headed by the prime minister with key ministers and chiefs of armed forces as members. Its meetings are held on need-based security environment. Then under the prime minister's umbrella, there is National Security Division (NSD), which is advisory in nature but has remained underutilized and sometimes non-functional. There is National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA), which deals with internal security matters and is headed by the prime minister with the same members as of CCNS.<sup>12</sup> Importantly,

the role of parliament is also ensured through Parliamentary Committee on National Security, and separate Standing Committees of Senate and National Assembly on Defence, Defence Production and Foreign Affairs headed by leaders of different political parties. Though the role of these Standing Committees is to deal with legislation on the given important issues, but these Committees can be more proactive and can recommend important policy guidelines to the government.

The above depiction of decision-making bodies shows that their role and composition are overlapped and mainly ineffective. Though the prime minister gets briefings on key national security issues from many agencies and state organs, but decision-making is mostly based on the choice/bias and thinking of the individual i.e., the prime minister, working on Rational Actor Model believing that the rationality of the chief executive is unquestionable. Therefore, there is a need to form a comprehensive, multi-purpose and all-encompassing decision-making body; either reorganize the existing one or altogether form a new body. During mid-1980s and mid-2000s, there have been efforts to form National Security Council, but it faced stiff opposition from different quarters and could not be formed permanently.

A close survey and analysis of major powers in the world reveals that all such states have a strong, professional, efficient, and permanent advisory role in the making of long-term security policy. Because sound and effective policymaking is only possible if the members are permanent, and they meet on regular basis to formulate policies during the peacetime. Though there are many such bodies in China, Russia, Iran, India, and Turkey but the most-quoted body is the National Security Council (NSC) of the United States and its National Security Advisor. The NSC works on the sound input of academic experts and think-tanks, who are known experts in their areas of research. For example, the US policy on China was devised by Henry Kissinger, its Soviet policy was articulated by Condoleezza Rice (Stanford University), and the Gulf Strategy was conceived by Paul Wolfowitz (John Hopkins). The Russian Federation has not changed its foreign minister since 2004, despite change of many leaders at the top. During the 2-week long negotiations between Iran and P-5+1, the role of Iranian foreign minister was remarkable in pursuing the national security interests of his country. Therefore, continuity gives experience and confidence to deal with challenging environment, and Pakistan needs such persons and bodies to deal with extremely challenging situation inside and outside the country.

Based on the experience, the idea of National Security Council does not have favorable disposition in many quarters in the existing decision-making circles, and forming a new body is also likely to face stiff resistance by the existing stakeholders. There are two important bodies, Cabinet Committee on National Security (CCNS) and National Security Division (NSD) in the prime minister secretariat, which need to be focused. There is need to rename the CCNS, as it includes members from outside the cabinet, its composition needs to be expanded, and its meeting should be held regularly in peacetime. Also, the NSD needs to be upgraded, empowered, and supplemented with research staff and think-tanks.

The CCNS should be renamed as National Committee/Council on National Security (NCNS) or simply National Security Committee (NSC), and its members should be expanded to include the Chairman Senate, Speaker National Assembly, Chairman Parliamentary Committee on National Security, and National Security Advisor. The inclusion of Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly and Senate would have been ideal but given the extreme political polarization, this would undermine the efficiency of the NCNS, but eventually they must be included at an appropriate time in the future. However, the NCNS/NSC should be empowered to co-opt any member, expert or academic/researcher to brief the Committee on a given issue. Its meeting should be held periodically after every three months without any delay and on emerging any security challenge. This committee must have reliable data and full information from other state organs to deliberate upon. The National Security Division should be its secretariat, which needs to be revamped and strengthened.

The NSD should be empowered to have full-fledged teams of known experts of the areas, qualified researchers, and nationally/internationally acclaimed academics for different set of security issues. The first and foremost task of the NSD should be to discuss, deliberate and formulate Pakistan's national security interests/objectives and make these public after its approval by the NCNS/NSC. The NSD must formulate a draft National Security Policy to be presented to the NCNS/NSC for debate and approval. The draft policy must be subtly made available for public debate through Think-Tanks and national media. The approved/consensus National Security Policy should be approved either by the National Assembly/Senate through an in-camera session or by having a special meeting of all heads of mainstream political parties. The NSD must be a permanent body to have daily/weekly meetings to prepare policy briefs on all

issues related to the national security interests/objectives. It should also issue regular policy briefs to the parliamentarians on the pattern of US Congressional Research Services. Likewise, the Parliamentary Committee on National Security should meet regularly to advise the government on different security issues after being briefed by experts/researchers and academia on the given area. Though the entire structure of National Security is to reformulate and redesign minutely, but these are few of the broader/fundamental suggestions for serious consideration.

## **Role of Think Tanks**

Think-Tanks play an important role in policy formulations as this work during peacetime and in stressless environment; however, the evolution of Think-Tanks in Pakistan is dismal. Till 1970s, there was only one such institute, Pakistan Institute of International Affairs (PIIA) based in Karachi. After the trauma of 1971 war, when the entire national decision-making structure was revamped, the government established six Area Study Centers in different universities across the country to have policy input. These Centers were focused on Americas, Europe, China, South Asia, Middle East, and Russia. However, the bureaucratic hurdles, lack of desired experts, lack of vision and adhocism greatly undermined the performance of these Centers, and they could not provide any sound and effective policy input to the government.

Subsequently, in 1980s more specialized research institutes were established by the government under some ministries. Initially, these institutes worked well but could not come up to the desired level of expectations. Later, in 1990s, there was a mushroom growth of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and private Think-Tanks, which did introduce the public debate and serious research on issues of national importance, but subsequently, these became commercial and non-productive. Moreover, like western democracies, all political parties should have their Think-Tanks within the parties, but that was never a serious consideration; otherwise, these could have provided alternative policy frameworks to the government. In Germany, major political parties in the parliament have official funding to carry out research on issues of national importance. In UK, the opposition has a shadow government, and in the US, all legislators have huge research set ups. Moreover, in the US, its National Security Council commissions the research to important Think-Tanks and research institutes; like the US Airforce gives its periodic research to the RAND Corporation. The powerful institutes like Carnegie, Asia Foundation and Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) regularly issue policy briefs on major national security

issues. Also, in Singapore the area research at its National University is financed by the ministry of commerce and trade to project long-term developments in specific areas for investors and businessmen. In France, the French Institute of International Relations (IFRI), is a private research body, which is world's 10<sup>th</sup> best research institute and provides policy guidelines to its clients.

Presently, with few exceptions, all Area Study Centers, Research Institutes, and NGOs lack permanent heads, required staff, qualified researchers and essential funding. Therefore, there is a need to revamp these altogether to define their scope, role and areas, with task-oriented Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). All these should become the base to supplant the NSD on sound research and policy inputs.

### **Sensitization of Media**

Over the years, Media has assumed the status of 4<sup>th</sup> pillar of the state; it has become an effective tool for governments to project and propagate their policies. The CNN and BBC effects have now been neutralized by the growth of national media of major powers such as Aljazeera of Qatar, RT of Russia, CGTN by China, DW of Germany, NHK by Japan, and Press TV by Iran to name a few. However, it is an irony that Pakistan despite having a mushroom growth of private media could not provide a reliable global voice to project its positive image. Though media becomes nationalistic in times of security challenge,<sup>13</sup> but it lacks awareness, sound data/information, and sensitization/securitization.

Securitization is a process in which one particular issue is highlighted to make it extremely important in terms of gravity of its impact to the national security that needs immediate attention of the decision-makers. However, media in Pakistan is racing to break the news first, and more concerned about its rating. With few exceptions, media in Pakistan started without much preparation, training and desired expertise in the new medium.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, with internal efforts and certain programs by the defence establishment through National Media Workshops and National Security Workshops, media has become sensitized to the security issues and does project the gravity in short term periods.<sup>15</sup>

However, to prepare the nation, state institutions, parliamentarians and decision makers, media should sensitize itself to become an effective tool of the state. Instead of looking for 'rating' 'breaking news' and over-emphasized focus on

domestic political issues, it should sensitize the security issues for general debate and suggesting consensus policy options for the government. Global electronic media networks have self-censorship, and they project the national security interests/objectives of their respective states. Pakistani media should follow the global trends with national agenda and become a voice for the nation and the country. Also, the government should upgrade and bring innovation in its PTV World channel to bring it at par with international standards to make it a real voice of the nation to project soft image and national security interests/objectives of Pakistan. The entire Pakistani media, official and private, should be sensitized/securitized to become an important organ of the state in projecting, suggesting, and highlighting various policy options to the government vis-à-vis national security issues.

### **Role of Strategic Community**

Strategic Community mainly consists of former ambassadors, high-ranking retired armed forces personnel and people from academia who are important in developing consensus on vital national security issues. Pakistan's strategic culture evolved very slowly in terms of its peculiar regional security environment.<sup>16</sup> Despite its vast international exposure, academia remained out of the inner circle of recommending policy options vis-à-vis security challenges. Same was the case with parliamentarians, who could not comprehend the essence of security issues due to their backgrounds and political priorities.

With evolving internal and external security environment since early 1980s, Pakistani strategic community has gradually but slowly tried to come up on the horizon. Afghanistan, terrorism, nuclearization and media played important role in bringing the strategic community to debate and discern security issues and recommend policy options. However, the over-arching role was still played by the defence/security establishment; it was mainly after 9/11, that the civilians, academia, and senior journalists were incorporated in security issues. The National Security Workshops were initiated that included participants from all segments of Pakistani society and institutions. The visits to forward battle areas, strategic installations, security briefings and real-time battle environment helped to inculcate strategic culture necessary for building security awareness, sensitization, and securitization. In the last one decade, the alumnus of these security workshops has grown substantially to provide a strong base for the strategic community's role in security policymaking. Presently, the National Security Division (NSD) has involved the strategic community in various groups

to suggest policy options in the given areas of concern. However, there is a need to institutionalize their role and make them part of various consultative groups and forums to utilize their experiences and vision for evolving a national security policy for Pakistan.

## **Conclusion**

Pakistan has suffered the most in its chequered history with immense security challenges and wrong priorities in the absence of a strong national security structure and long-term visionary policies. Given the prevalent security environment in and outside the country with multiple security challenges, time is premium. The above are broader parameters of revamping and re-orienting the national security structure/issues. There is a need to refine these ideas into tangible operational tasks. The government should immediately form a committee or task force consisting upon persons from academia, security establishment, bureaucracy, media, and women representatives to work on the national security issues. A draft policy should be formed, debated in the parliament, and should become a consensus document to be pursued with vigor and zeal. Pakistan has great potential to be a vibrant, modern, and progressive nation, only need is to put it on the right path and direction.

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