

Non-Traditional Security Narrative and National Security Policy of Pakistan: Limitations and Policy Recommendations

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Abstract

Since 1947, Pakistan had an Indian-centric security policy, but after 1979, situation in Afghanistan became a concern for Pakistan's security as well. Later after 9/11, a new security threat emerged in the form of terrorism and this security challenge was also included into Pakistan's security policies. Despite these security concerns, Pakistan never documented an official national security policy for the country. Until recently Pakistan's first official national security policy was made public titled as 'National Security Policy of Pakistan 2022-2026' that is based on a citizen-centric approach, and with a focus on geo-economics together with geo-strategy, the relationship between economic, traditional, and human security is emphasized by keeping the economic security at the center of this comprehensive national security of Pakistan. But, at the same time, this policy document has certain shortcomings as well. This paper primarily discusses the 'National Security Policy of Pakistan 2022-2026', highlighting the non-traditional security challenges to Pakistan that the document fails to mention. The paper also explains the implementation of the non-traditional security narrative in Pakistan through the provisions of the required institutions and the recommendations to make this an actual comprehensive national security policy for Pakistan.

Keywords: National Security Policy, Non-traditional security, Economic security, Human security, Institutions

Introduction

On 14th August 1947, Pakistan gained independence but soon realized that the new country faced immense security challenges from its neighbor India, especially, regarding the territory of Kashmir. With three wars fought in 1948, 1965 and 1971, there has been a limited war in 1999 together with conflicts and cross-border firing incidents between Pakistan and India. In 1998, these security challenges shifted from conventional military threats to nuclear threat after nuclear tests were conducted by both India and Pakistan. During this time, Pakistan had a focus towards Afghanistan as well when in 1979 Russia invaded Afghanistan, and Pakistan helped US and its allies in containing Russian invasion, and bringing an Afghan government in power

that would be favorable and beneficial for Pakistan. With a deep focus on traditional security threats, the non-traditional security (NTS) challenges remained neglected. Terrorism was the main NTS threat that emerged after 9/11, and while Pakistan was engulfed in the war on terror campaign it provided an environment for other NTS threats to grow and flourish (Mansoor & Mukhtar, 2021). Despite these challenges an official national security policy was never developed in Pakistan and still with the emergence of NTS threats, Pakistan still focused on India and state-centric security policies. It was until 2014 that the realization grew to develop a comprehensive security policy of Pakistan that would include NTS challenges to Pakistan as well. On 14th January 2022, the National Security Policy (NSP) was formally developed and made public titled as ‘National Security Policy of Pakistan 2022-2026’, but it has shortcomings that need to be addressed. This paper addresses those shortcomings of the NSP and explains the implementation of NTS narrative through the required institutions.

This article is divided into different sections. The first section describes in detail what is the NSP of Pakistan. The second section explains the concept of NTS while the third section gives an analysis of the NSP explaining the successes and shortcomings of this policy document. Fourth section explains the working of the institutions in Pakistan with reference to NTS narrative, followed by conclusion and recommendations.

National Security Policy of Pakistan 2022-2026

After rigorous efforts for seven years, with policy formulation process beginning in 2014 to develop the NSP of Pakistan, the public version of around 54 pages was officially released on January 14th, 2022, titled as ‘National Security Policy of Pakistan: 2022-2026’. The full version of this document is 110 pages that is not available for public at this stage. This comprehensive security framework is based on the citizen centric approach with economic security at its core and focuses on geo-economics together with geo-strategy. Also, this document appreciates the interdependency between economic, traditional, and human security that will help in preparing Pakistan for better security outcomes for the country in coming years as gains from the economic sector can be used for traditional security and human development. Moreover, this policy document contains eight sections, with the first two explaining the process of formulating the policy and the conceptual elements of the security policy of Pakistan along with the principles that help in understanding the process of formulating the policy as well as its implementation process while the rest of the six sections deal with different themes related to traditional, economic, and human security aspects (National Security Division, 2022).

Within the economic security domain, three economic challenges have been mentioned in this document that are a challenge for the national security of Pakistan. The first one is the ‘external imbalances’ that is because of higher foreign exchange outflows, second challenge is related to the socio-economic differences between the rich and poor, and third is the economic disparities between different regions in Pakistan. It also discusses the direct impact of opportunities and challenges within different sectors on the above-mentioned challenges and the policies for combating the economic security challenges by having a sustainable growth rate and development. This document calls for establishing regional connectivity, increasing

exports, developing blue economy, managing fiscal deficits, reforming the energy sector, providing affordable education, bringing in technology and innovation, and preparing skilled manpower according to international market demands to help bring in remittances for the country (National Security Division, 2022).

The NSP discusses the human security domain in length, explaining the challenges and policies related to this area. The document explains that how the rise in population especially with an increase in youth population within Pakistan is becoming an economic challenge for the country. Also, it has been discussed that over the years there has been a rise in urban migration calling for development in rural areas and introducing urban planning initiatives. In terms of linkage with national security, another sector has gained prominence after Covid-19 and that is the health security. According to this document, Pakistan needs to introduce healthcare reforms and needs to maintain quality health facilities that are affordable for the public and needs to continue health insurance programs. Another threat to Pakistan is of climate change and efforts have been taken already like setting up a ministry together with a Climate Change Policy and tree plantation campaigns. Water management policies and climate mitigation and adaptation policy efforts must be made as well to counter climate challenges. Food security also needs to be ensured within Pakistan as there are multiple challenges in this regard within the country. Agricultural reforms, access to healthy food and an increase in exports can help in regard to food security. Human rights and gender equality is also needed within Pakistan by providing safe environment, and working opportunities to women and transgenders and providing them protection against gender-based violence (National Security Division, 2022).

While discussing about defense capabilities and traditional security challenges on land, air, water, and space, it mentions for the first time the NTS challenges to the security of the state of Pakistan in the form of cyber security and hybrid warfare. This document also discusses the challenges to national unity because of different cultures and identities within Pakistan, and also because of the socio-economic inequalities along the lines of poverty or due to geographical reasons coupled with external interferences that are trying to promote disharmony within Pakistan. Terrorism, radicalization, extremism, drug trafficking and organized crimes are some of the other internal security challenges to Pakistan mentioned within this policy document. Pakistan's foreign policy with different countries, and multilateral cooperation within international and regional organizations is discussed too, calling for economic diplomacy, while, at the same time, strengthening the political diplomacy as well because by using political relations, Pakistan can have economic gains by establishing new economic alliances and partnerships (National Security Division, 2022).

Concept of Non-Traditional Security

For this article, the concept of NTS needs to be explained as it will be used further in this study. After Cold War ended, the concept of security began to evolve to accommodate threats that were non-military in nature and did not focus too much on territorial security. It was at this time that the concept of human security began to emerge. Under the Human Development Report 1994, seven broad categories were identified that included the threats to human security namely economic security, food security, health

security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security (UNDP, 1994). But many scholars argued that the concept of human security was too broad, and it focused only on the survival and well-being of humans. Scholars like Buzan, Weaver and de Wilde in their work also expanded the meaning of security, and identified political, economic, societal, and environmental sectors of security along with military security (Buzan et al., 1998). But a much more detailed explanation of NTS was later given by the Consortium of Non-Traditional Security Studies in Asia which defined this concept in the following words: “Non-traditional security issues are challenges to the survival and well-being of peoples and states that arise primarily out of non-military sources, such as climate change, resource scarcity, infectious diseases, natural disasters, irregular migration, food shortages, people smuggling, drug trafficking and transnational crime” (Caballero-Anthony, 2016). So, according to this definition, NTS not only focuses on humans like previously human security did, but it also includes threats to both individuals and states that are non-military in nature and requires non-military means to deal with them as traditional approaches are not enough to counter these threats. This concept will be used in the following paragraphs to discuss the NTS challenges to Pakistan that have been overlooked in the NSP, and how this security narrative can be implemented through the institutions.

The National Security Policy of Pakistan: Strengths and Shortcomings

This document titled “National Security Policy of Pakistan 2022-2026” is an achievement for Pakistan, as since independence we had been unable to formulate the official national security policy, and the policy we had in an undocumented form for all these years was Indian-centric and focused mainly on traditional security challenges to Pakistan. This document is a move away from that state-centric approach to citizen-centric approach, and it is the first time that Pakistan has recognized that there are other challenges to the country as well especially related to economic and human security which had been overlooked over the years. This document being a comprehensive national security document also outlines the traditional security threats to the defense and territorial integrity of Pakistan, but, at the same time, it recognizes the NTS threats related to cyber security and hybrid warfare that are becoming a challenge for the security of the state of Pakistan internally and externally.

Despite, being an achievement for Pakistan, there are several shortcomings in this document as well which need to be addressed and will be explained in the following paragraphs. Although this document mentions about non-traditional security, but it fails to consider the actual concept of this security domain. According to the definition of non-traditional security, as mentioned before, these are the security challenges to the well-being and survival of both people and the state, but, unfortunately, this document has adopted a citizen-centric approach with focusing on economic and human security. Within the policy document, there are places where economic and health security is linked with the security of state, but it does not consider the issues related to the rest of the human security domain that are challenging the security of the state and well-being. So, NSP does not consider the actual concept of NTS which is the biggest shortcoming of the document.

Also, there are numerous NTS threats that Pakistan is facing that NSP fails to mention. Currently, political differences and political instability is one of the biggest security challenges for Pakistan. Unfortunately, since independence, Pakistan could not have a stable democratic government, and up till now not a single government has been unable to complete its five-year tenure. This political instability has also been caused by military takeovers time and again. Also, political parties of Pakistan have failed to cooperate with one another. Like in the past few months, a collective dialogue of all political parties has not been achieved even after public invitations from Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to PTI Chairman Imran Khan to have talks for solving the ongoing economic crisis which the latter turned down (Arab News PK, 2022;

Dawn, 2022a; Dunya News, 2022). Even prior to this, whenever PTI government wanted to implement policies for the public, they were criticized by the opposition, and there were constant walk outs from the National Assembly, despite the fact that the ones sitting there are elected representatives of the general public of the country who elect them to promote their interests and solve their issues, not to fight among themselves just because they are from different parties having their own personal agendas. Ultimately, this political competition is weakening the law-and-order situation of the country leading to low economic growth, and is fueling a negative image of Pakistan, while, at the same time, it is benefitting our adversaries and is providing them with the opportunity to take advantage of this situation to destabilize Pakistan. Similarly, there are no longer just religious or ethnic sects, there are now groups based on affiliations with the political parties of Pakistan that are becoming a security concern for the country. Humiliating others based on their political affiliations is becoming a norm in our society which can escalate into fights and bloodshed in future which is an alarming situation for Pakistan (Dawn, 2022b). Overall, these political differences are sabotaging the efforts to tackle the rest of the non-traditional and traditional security challenges that Pakistan is facing providing opportunity to adversaries and terrorists to gain ground for disrupting the state security. Dr. Nazir Hussain, in his article, also raised the concern regarding political and economic instability, and explained that the major security challenges to Pakistan whether it be terrorism, climate change or food scarcity arise from these internal political and economic challenges. So, to have a long-term visionary security policy, both internal and external security objectives and interests should be included to attain the comprehensive national security policy that Pakistan has been lacking (Hussain, 2021).

Also, there are numerous economic security challenges that pose a threat to national security of Pakistan and has a spillover effect on other sectors as well. One of the NTS challenges that Pakistan is facing, especially in terms of economic security, is of brain drain but rather than acknowledging the negative effects it is having on the economy and the country, it is mentioned as an opportunity for the benefit of the country. More than 5.3 million Pakistanis have moved abroad in search for better opportunities at life since January 2022 (BEOE, n.d.). Although there is a hidden advantage of brain drain in terms of bringing in remittances, but it is a short-term solution to improve the economy because if they stop sending in remittances under sudden circumstances the country's entire economy would collapse. So, rather than focusing on short-term gains of remittances, long-term economic solutions in terms of tax reforms are needed. In Pakistan, tax collection compulsion is just for the middle class while the business and industrial community gets exemptions from the government. Thus, this is becoming an economic challenge for Pakistan and is also a socio-economic challenge especially for the middle class.

Another economic security challenge is regarding the State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) in Pakistan that are in loss and are devastating for the economy of Pakistan. There are around 212 SOEs in Pakistan, out of which 85 are commercial SOEs, and during the year 2018-2019, sum of the losses of the 10 of the most loss making commercial SOEs contributed to 90% of the total losses that included Pakistan Railways, PIA, Pakistan Steel Mills, NHA and different power DISCOs (Finance Division, 2021a). As the state is spending billions on these SOEs while they are not bringing in any profit for the country, it is negatively impacting the economic growth and the economy, and it impacts the state security as well.

Pakistan is also facing another NTS challenge in the form of refugees. Pakistan, since 1979, has been home to millions of Afghan refugees making Pakistan the third largest refugee hosting country of the world (Amparado et al., 2021). Around 1.3 million Afghans are registered in Pakistan (UNHCR Pakistan, 2022) while there are so many more who are not, especially after the influx of refugees post US withdrawal. Apart from the security threats, they are having a socio-economic impact on our country as well. At a time when we are struggling to feed and fulfil the needs of our own people, there are so many refugees that are depending on Pakistan for their needs too. As a result of this, there is a heavy burden on the already diminishing natural resources in Pakistan as well as on the overall crippling economy of our country.

Currently, Pakistan is facing extreme environmental security challenges and although Pakistan contributes less than 1% to total carbon emissions, it has been constantly included in the list of top ten countries that are the most vulnerable to climate change (Shahid & Adnan, 2021). So, Pakistan is suffering from floods, rapid glacier melting, glacial lake outbursts and changes in temperature and rain pattern because of international carbon emissions from developed countries. But they are not the only ones to be blamed. There are internal environmental damages in Pakistan as well like construction in riverbeds and ephemeral streams, cutting of trees on a large scale especially for development purposes, excessive private transport usage and increase in urbanization. So, when our own model is impacting the environment adversely how can we expect the world to realize their environmental mistakes leading to catastrophe in Pakistan (Imran, 2022). Similarly, Pakistan is suffering from air pollution as well. Every year Pakistan faces the problem of smog in winters causing health problems and accidents. Pakistan has the 3rd worst air quality in the world as of 2021 (IQAir, n.d.) and Lahore is considered as the most polluted city of the world (Ali, 2021). These figures show the level of air pollution in Pakistan.

Another NTS challenge is regarding the education system. Rote learning and faulty examination system have disrupted the basic education system of Pakistan. Also, most of the syllabus being taught in Pakistan is outdated. We do need advanced technological education but first the basis of the entire system needs to be improved. Also, while calling for affordable educational system, there have been budget cuts, and asking universities to generate their own funds by increasing fee which is making government universities almost as expensive as private ones, making it impossible for students from lower class and even from middle class to attain higher education (The Express Tribune, 2019).

In addition, there are numerous health challenges as well that Pakistan has been facing. Although, the realization of health security emerged after COVID-19 pandemic, Pakistan has been facing multiple health challenges for a very long time with only spending about 1.2% of the total GDP in 2020-2021, according to the Economic Survey of Pakistan (Finance Division, 2021b). HIV/AIDS, TB, Malaria, Dengue, Hepatitis, Influenza, and Measles are just few of the diseases that are prevalent in Pakistan at a large scale (Khalil et al., 2017). Then, there are problems in the overall healthcare system of Pakistan like there is no improvement in health infrastructure, and the salaries of the people of health sector are not up to the mark. Also, most of the rural areas do not have healthcare facilities available. Pakistan spends about \$37 per capita on health while the recommended amount is \$44 per capita by the WHO, and Pakistan has been ranked at 122 out of a total 190 countries by WHO in health care (Farooq et al., 2021). Another problem, related with health security, is regarding the religious misconceptions within Pakistan that is becoming a hurdle in containing diseases like Polio (Nawaz et al., 2021). These health-related issues are not only a challenge for the citizens of Pakistan but also for the state security, and it is very evident from the fact that after Covid-19 the health sector collapsed affecting the economy of Pakistan and there was constant threat of unrest within the country as well (Jaspal, 2020).

Also, Pakistan is facing food security threats especially in terms of locust attacks. Pakistan, since independence, had locust attacks in 1952, 1962, 1992, 2019, 2020 and 2021 which is a clear challenge for the agriculture and economy of Pakistan. It has been estimated that in fiscal year 2020, Pakistan faced a decline of 2% in the economic agricultural productivity because of the locust attacks. These locust swarms impacted crops of mangoes, cotton, potatoes, and wheat which are some major crops of Pakistan that are even exported to other countries (Showler et al., 2022). Such educational, health and food security issues can have an impact on development of Pakistan and on the state security as well.

Institutions and Non-Traditional Security Narrative in Pakistan

In Pakistan, since independence, the focus has been on the military sector because of threats from India, terrorism, and weak law and order situation of the country, so institutions concerned with traditional security have only been developed over time. Also, a major part of the budget each year is spent on defense

sector while other sectors like health and education get a very minor share. Because of the development of military sector over the years, most of the institutions related to disaster management like National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) are being run and controlled by the security forces, and even in emergency situations within Pakistan it is the military that steps in to help. So, the only institution that is working for certain NTS challenges are just the institutions that have focused on traditional security. But now with the acceptance of NTS narrative, there is a challenge for the non-military institutions of Pakistan to implement policies concerning these NTS challenges.

It is a grave concern within Pakistan that the political institutions have weakened with time especially due to the political differences within the political parties of Pakistan. These differences have become a hurdle in the working of other institutions as well because if one party is in government and they take certain policy measures, when the next party comes into power, they dismiss those policies and start from scratch according to what they want. Even if policies are not dismissed, the party in power gets criticized by other parties for doing something they themselves had done previously. In 2019, the then Prime Minister Imran Khan created National Development Council and had Chief of Army Staff (COAS) as a member of it, but PPP criticized that already there was a National Economic Council, and why was COAS a part of it and if he had to be a part, there was already a National Security Council with finance minister being a member of it (Khan, 2019). Recently, when COAS talked to US officials and later to UAE and Saudi authorities to secure an early disbursement of \$1.2bn in funds under the IMF program, Imran Khan criticized that why was he interfering in it as it is not his job to deal with economic issues (The News, 2022). Also, most of the security institutions like Cabinet Committee on National Security (CCNS) and National Security Division (NSD) all have Prime Minister as the head, so it is just one person who makes all the decisions according to his own thinking and choices (Hussain, 2021). This clearly indicates why institutions fail to work effectively and to formulate sound policies.

Moreover, there exist different ministries, councils and commissions developed primarily to tackle different NTS challenges like National Economic Council, Ministry of Climate Change, Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency, National Response Centre for Cyber Crime, Ministry of National Food Security and Research, Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, National Commission on the Status of Women, and National Commission for Human Development. Along with these institutions, there exists policy frameworks as well together with timeframes to implement them but, unfortunately, in Pakistan there is no transparent check and balance. Also, political instability curtails any efforts made in this regard by these institutions. Moreover, bureaucracy is also forced to take political sides which further weakens the working of the institutions.

In addition to this, with major part of the budget going towards the defense sector, Pakistan is failing to cope with the NTS threats. Recent floods in Pakistan have destroyed nearly 15% of rice crop and 40% of the cotton crop, and it has been estimated that the total financial flood damages account for more than \$30bn (Entcheva, n.d.). If Pakistan would have spent even \$1bn there could have been less damage to the country. Pakistan does need budget for defense purposes but at the same time non-traditional sectors need finances to work as well.

Furthermore, Pakistani government cannot just take steps domestically, there is a need for regional and international cooperation as well. Unfortunately, Pakistan has a weak foreign policy and weak lobbying, and even within international institutions the focus of Pakistani government is on the issues of Kashmir, India, and Palestine. Pakistan, thus, needs to have a strong foreign policy, and need to have strong lobbying tactics to acquire international cooperation that is needed on the matters of NTS issues. India, for example, retain their economic relations with all the major countries even when they have any military issues with any country like they are working to contain Chinese expansion and have border issues with them but, at the same time, India is maintaining economic relations with them. This, in return, has benefitted India immensely as international community is cooperating with them in all sectors of security whether it is traditional security or NTS sectors, and other countries are also taking a stand for them in

acquiring representation in different international institutions. But Pakistan, on the other hand, has failed in this regard, as Pakistan has developed relations with other countries depending on the defense relations with them which is having an impact on the international standing of Pakistan. Pakistan's negotiation skills are weak to the extent that for a very minimal amount from IMF, Pakistan has agreed to every demand of theirs, bringing the economy of Pakistan into a crisis that is negatively impacting the country altogether.

Conclusion and Way Forward

The first ever security policy of Pakistan 'National Security Policy of Pakistan 2022-2026' was unveiled to the public on 14th January 2022. Despite this document being the first national security policy of Pakistan and acknowledging the economic and human security aspects, there are several shortcomings of the document. Although NSP and the institutions recognize the NTS challenges to Pakistan, the document fails to consider the actual concept of this security domain. Also, there is no explanation of how political differences, and political instability is the biggest security challenge for Pakistan and is creating lawlessness, is having an impact on human security, and is destabilizing our economy and the entire country all together. Moreover, this document lacks many economic security challenges that Pakistan must deal with like the issue of brain drain, and loss making SOEs. Influx of Afghan refugees is becoming a security threat and are posing socio-economic challenges as well for Pakistan as fulfilling their demands is burdening the economy of the country. Similarly, Pakistan is facing immense environmental security challenges like floods including urban flooding, and air pollution. Pakistan has educational and health challenges as well which are a threat to both the citizens and the state.

Now with the recognition of NTS challenges, institutions are required to implement the required procedure needed to tackle them. Development of military sector, excessive defense budget and political differences are creating a hurdle in this process. For institutions to develop, there is a need to shift focus from military to non-military institutes, and budget needs to be channelized to these non-traditional institutions as well. Political parties need to work together as well to make better, comprehensive policies to deal with the new emerging challenges, and this will, ultimately, lead to better performance of other institutions. Rather than forming new councils, commissions, or frameworks after change in government, improve the working of the ones that are already existing. Along with this, professionals need to be recruited in a particular domain according to their educational qualification and merit, and reforms are required for recruitment in civil services as well. Also, involve think tanks and scholars in the decision-making process. Rule based order together with transparent check and balance is needed as well for implementing the non-traditional framework in the given timeframe. Together with this, there is a need to acquire international and regional support which can only be done through better foreign policy.

To make this national security policy truly a comprehensive policy, there is a need to include the NTS challenges that the current document has failed to acknowledge. In addition to this, comprehensive policies need to be laid down to deal with them, and most of these policies need to be made public, so the people of Pakistan can know that the government along with the institutions are working to tackle the NTS threats that Pakistan is facing. Also, this security policy can only be made comprehensive when the required institutions for NTS are made strong enough and improved enough that they can highlight what the actual ground realities are and which policies are needed to overcome them, and this all can be done when professionals of that field are recruited who have the actual knowledge about that sector. Only by making the improvements in the document itself and in the institutions, a true comprehensive national security policy of Pakistan can be achieved.

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