

CONCEPT NOTE

Narratives of National Security Conference, 2014

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Introduction

The term 'national security' has adopted broader connotations since the end of the Cold War and remains no longer confined to military security and issues of sovereignty and territorial integrity. It now encompasses a broad range of threats, including economic, political, social, and, as of late, cyber and environmental security. Since the challenges of the 21st century are no longer defined by a single prominent threat, a state's national security policy must cast a wider net beyond simply relying on hard power means, to ensure national security.

Pakistan's regional and internal security environment is both complex and complicated. Three cycles of war in Afghanistan over a period of 34 years have greatly impacted Pakistan's state and society. Besides balancing conventional threats along the border, the state faces serious challenges of nation building and ethnic, political, religious and sectarian threats from multiple militant groups.

The objective of this conference will be to analyze and review the narratives of the national security debate in Pakistan, covering both traditional and non-traditional security threats that are debated and theorized in the security literature on Pakistan. The Institute hopes to make this national security conference an annual event that will serve as its flagship conference.

Objectives

This conference aims to achieve five major objectives:

- 1) Map the existing narratives on national security in Pakistan, accounting for all dimensions and perspectives.
- 2) Seek clarity about the security challenges Pakistan currently faces.
- 3) Analyze the responses to national security challenges and determine how pragmatic and relevant they are within the Pakistani context.
- 4) Encourage the generation of new ideas and thoughts on national security that may positively influence public policy.
- 5) Produce policy-relevant scholarship on national security by bringing together scholars specializing in national security and its sub-disciplines, from Pakistan and abroad.

Proposed Themes

I. Debating the national security dilemma

National security traditionally focused on the ability of the state's military power to deter aggression against its territorial boundaries and ensure the security of peoples, political system and institutions against internal and external threats. The conception of national security in the 21st century, however, accounts for not just military security and proactive diplomacy but also economic and political security, food and environmental security as well as energy security.

The first issue that must be addressed is what national security means to Pakistan and how the state conceptualizes national security. Some salient national security considerations include Pakistan's geopolitical dynamics and rivalries; wars in Afghanistan and their impact on the borderlands; the outstanding Kashmir dispute; and problematic relations with India.

Today Pakistan faces internal security challenges that are threatening the country's social, economic and political fabric. Chief among them are ethnic militancy in Karachi; an ongoing ethno-nationalist insurgency in Balochistan and the rapidly growing influence of Islamic radicalism that manifests itself through the activities of militant sectarian organizations and the Pakistani Taliban.

Proposed sub-themes: Challenges of geopolitical imbalance; Kashmir dispute and its possible solutions; internal diversity and issues of ethnic militancy.

II. Narratives on Islamic radicalism

One of the most formidable national security threats faced by Pakistan today is its ongoing fight against Islamic radicalism. Radical groups such as the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) directly challenge the state as they seek fundamental changes to Pakistan's social and religious order through violent means. Moreover, militant sectarian groups have also infiltrated urban areas, in Karachi, Quetta and several towns of Southern Punjab. This is evident in the 687 sectarian killings that occurred in Pakistan in 2013 alone. Given the Taliban's strong collaboration with other militant and sectarian groups, terrorist violence has undergone a dangerous transformation. An intensifying and collective network of militant outfits with political and religious ties has led to the organization and execution of premeditated violence to inflict maximum damage to Pakistan's security forces, civilian population and society at large.

Proposed sub-themes: Sectarianism; extremism; Talibanization, violent ethnic militancy.

III. Narratives on Pakistan's role in South Asia

South Asia is a complex neighborhood and it is important to define Pakistan's concerns and the role it sees for itself within the region. The Kashmir issue

continues to be a bone of contention between Pakistan and India and has the potential to destabilize the region further. Meanwhile, Pakistan's western neighbor Afghanistan, a hotbed of Islamist militancy with a crippled economic and political infrastructure, also presents a threat to the region as well as Pakistan's stability, especially in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) along the porous border.

Beyond the immediate neighborhood, Pakistan is also attempting to make economic inroads into Southwest and Central Asia. Its association with countries in Southwest Asia has proven beneficial especially in terms of economic gains, such as remittances sent by overseas Pakistanis from Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Conversely, Pakistan is exploring energy trade projects with Iran and Central Asian countries, including the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline and the Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline. Further efforts include collaboration with China in the development of the deep-sea port at Gwadar and the Gwadar to Kashgar railways and economic corridor, which will connect China's western region to Pakistan's Gwadar port.

Proposed sub-themes: Regional balance of power; Pakistan's policy towards Afghanistan; making inroads in Southwest and Central Asia

IV. Narratives on India-Pakistan relations

While India-Pakistan security relations remain a hotly debated issue in any discussion pertaining to the subcontinent, there is also a need to focus on issues that receive relatively less attention in policy and scholarly literature, particularly that of trade and cultural exchange. Bilateral trade will undoubtedly be significant to peace and cooperation between the two countries. The two countries too acknowledge that opening the doors to trade would be an important step towards political and economic harmony thus positively impacting the security environment. Other important considerations in India-Pakistan relations include cultural exchanges and improvements in the visa regime as a way of promoting and enhancing people-to-people interaction between the two nations.

Despite the efforts towards peace, it is difficult to ignore the turbulent history between the two countries and the unresolved issues of Kashmir, water security and border clashes. Pakistan and India have been nuclear rivals for far too long, perceiving each other as a constant national security threat. In an effort to attain a comprehensive understanding of the issue, the two countries nuclear arms and security postures and doctrines need to be examined in greater detail.

Proposed sub-themes: Trade as a security agenda; culture and international harmony; nuclear rivalry—tactical nuclear weapons, nuclear doctrines and hard security issues.

V. Narratives on Pakistan's place in the international community

Pakistan's role in the international community will be determined by how well it manages to pursue its own strategic interests by enhancing ties with countries like the United States, China, Russia, the Gulf, Saudi Arabia and Iran. Pakistan has had a tumultuous relationship with the US with the key source of disagreement arising from US concern over militant groups operating along Pakistan's border with Afghanistan and the US strategy of drone strikes fueling the ire of the Pakistani government and the public. Meanwhile, the rapprochement between Iran and the US is likely to cause a stir in some parts of the Middle East. Given the intense rivalry and power struggle between Iran and Saudi Arabia in the region, Pakistan will face the challenge of balancing its critical and long-standing relationship with Saudi Arabia and relationship with Iran, its western neighbor.

Proposed sub-themes: Pakistan's relations with the US, China, Russia, Iran and Saudi Arabia.

VI. Narratives on non-traditional security threats

Globalization and the resulting interconnectedness of countries have exacerbated many international security threats due to their potential to transcend national borders. As such, non-traditional or 'soft' security threats have also earned their place on the international security agenda. Given that Pakistan's national security priorities tend to be skewed in favor of traditional military threats, it is important to analyze these non-traditional challenges and their relevance to the national security discourse in the country.

Most critical amongst these is Pakistan's youth bulge. Young adults (ages 15-29) comprise 30% of Pakistan's population; a demographic trend that is expected to last for another three decades. As a result, a high population growth rate inflicts tremendous pressure on the economy and the environment. Changes in precipitation, temperature and extreme natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods and droughts have become increasingly frequent in the past few decades leading to the destruction of homes, infrastructure and internal displacement of people. Moreover, in the coming decades, water will serve to be a potential source of conflict between India, Pakistan, China and Bangladesh, as these countries struggle to seek survival by securing their share of water from the major rivers in the region. Pakistan also faces a crippling energy crisis and will have to depend on its neighbors and regional power politics for its long-term energy security.

Proposed sub-themes: Climate change; water issues; demographic trends; political violence; energy security; political economy of drug trafficking.

VII. Pakistan's security: Cost of the conflicts

Pakistan has suffered significant losses amounting to over \$100 billion in the global war on terror, with over 49,000 lives lost. These facts are well known but the wider ramifications of this war, coupled with the country's own internal conflict with the Pakistani Taliban, are increasingly critical. The loss of human life, high inflation, high-level political assassinations, inertia of the national economy and the decline of international investments are just some of the economic costs associated with conflict. This is further translated into increasing mortality rates for infants and adults; rising unemployment numbers and declining figures for education that steadily unravel an already unstable country. The psychological effects of surviving within a conflict-zone will also deal tremendous long-term social concerns. Moreover, Pakistan's rich cultural heritage encompassing pluralism, vibrant traditions and social solidarity are all under threat.

In looking at the cost of conflict, it is also important to analyze the cost of Pakistan's enduring conflict with India both in terms of the financial and military costs of meeting the Indian threat and what the rivalry and arms race means for Pakistan's strategic thinking and policy choices.

Other costs to be considered include the policy choices that have led to foregone economic and social development resulting in the institutional decline of the state.

Proposed sub-themes: Economy; criminal justice system; social demography; culture and heritage; image and diplomacy; social psychology and social turmoil.

VIII. Media and the Narratives on National Security

Media, which is regarded as the 'fourth pillar' of the state, has flourished as an institution in Pakistan over the past decade. Media has carved out a niche for itself as a major power broker and perception setter in Pakistan. In the current environment where the country is fighting home-grown insurgency and other non-traditional forms of threat, media has a vital role to play in setting and defining narratives on national security in Pakistan.

Policymakers and planners working on the national security narrative sometimes fail to account for the impact their actions will have on the stories and narratives populations use to frame their reactions to change. But stories are also problematic as strategic documents, and there is a need to advance the ethical standards and practices of democratic journalism through discussion, research, teaching, professional outreach, and newsroom partnerships.

Proposed sub-themes: Media as an Element of National Power, Impact of Media on the Society and National Security, Effects of Media on Global and Regional Environment, Media and the Foreign Policy of Pakistan and National Security Discourses.

IX. Learning from Lessons from the Region: Sri Lanka, Nepal and Afghanistan

Pakistan at present faces multiple security challenges arising out of home grown terrorism by Islamist militants, sectarian and separatist groups which pose a key threat to national security of the country. The Pakistani state is fully engaged in dealing with these challenges; but there is a clear division and lack of clarity on how to tackle the menace of terrorism and extremism at a national level. While efforts so far towards eradicating religious extremism and terrorism have primarily focused on addressing the symptoms of terrorism, little emphasis has been paid on dealing with the root causes that spur individuals towards violent acts.

For a long-term solution, therefore, it is necessary for the State to adopt a comprehensive counterinsurgency model and learn from past operations as well as the best international counterinsurgency practices from the region. In this regard, the success stories from the case studies of Sri Lanka dealing with the LTTE, and Nepal dealing with Maoists, can be used as an effective tool in formulating and enhancing the National Security Narratives for Pakistan.

Proposed sub-themes: Counter-insurgency, Intra-National Security, Practices in South Asian Countries, Effects of Peace Talks& Negotiations