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# PAKISTAN'S 'CITIZEN CENTRIC' NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY

IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA

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# Introduction

If you wish to read a compilation of the values of the current liberal international order, Pakistan's National Security Policy is for you. If you want to study for a basic security studies test with questions like "what are the conventional and non-conventional threats the world faces today" or for a high school economics test, Pakistan's National Security Policy is for you. Even if you want a compilation of general foreign policy measures, Pakistan's National Security Policy is for you. Pakistan unveiled the 48-page public version of its first-ever National Security Policy document on the 14<sup>th</sup> of January 2022. This issue brief will begin by examining the circumstances of the release of the NSP. Following a quick analysis of its content in an attempt to determine Pakistan's commitment to the policy, this piece will analyse the impact and implications of the document for India.

## Pakistan's International Position

Pakistan's international position is unenviable. It is caught between missteps, indebtedness, commissions, and omissions. Until now, Pakistan has followed a covert policy of cross-border terrorism to destabilize Kashmir and Afghanistan. It harboured and supplied arms, ammunition, and finances. It also provided support for violent religious extremism.<sup>1</sup> These policies not only failed but led to domestic turmoil and Pakistan getting greylisted by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) for financing terrorist groups.<sup>2</sup> Pakistan's GDP in 2021 was \$280 billion and had several structural deficiencies. It approached the IMF many times for aid but could not implement the conditions of the IMF. Pakistan is losing its significance in the international arena. During the Cold War, it was an ally of the US and played a critical role in purging the Soviet Union from Afghanistan. It also played a prominent role in the Middle East. In the present, however, Pakistan

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<sup>1</sup> The Indian Express. 2021. *Terrorists enjoy free pass in Pakistan: India slams Pakistan at UNSC*. November 17. Accessed January 19, 2021. <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/steps-against-cross-border-terrorism-india-pakistan-uns-7626713/>.

<sup>2</sup> The Hindu. 2021. *Another shade of grey: On Pakistan staying in FATF list*. June 28. Accessed January 19, 2022. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/another-shade-of-grey-the-hindu-editorial-on-pakistan-staying-in-fatf-list/article35008152.ece>.

has lost the clout it enjoyed in the Middle East. It also pursued policies like harbouring terrorist groups and supporting the Taliban that irked the US and its allies. It is also projecting an image of being a close partner of China. However, its ties with China have been troubling as the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is tainted by corruption, terrorism, tensions with civilians, and increasing debt. Domestically, Pakistan must deal with defence expenditure that has gone out of its hands, poor resource mobilization, poor economic performance, ethnic conflicts, and insurgencies.<sup>3</sup>

Amidst everything that is happening to this country, Pakistan is in dire need of revitalisation and securing a favourable position in the eyes of the major actors in the international system. Releasing a statement of its intentions and aspirations into the public domain is the first step toward its redemption.

## **Pakistan’s National Security Policy 2022-2026: Content and Analysis**

Hailed as a citizen-centric policy that places geoeconomics at its core, the National Security Policy is successful at being comprehensive. The components of Pakistan’s national security include national cohesion, economic security, defence and territorial integrity, internal security, human security, and foreign policy in the changing world. The objective of the National Security Policy is to articulate “Pakistan’s national security vision, interests, and priorities” and to provide “a detailed implementation framework.” The intention of the public version of the document is “to provide an insight into the overall vision and direction of the country’s national security,” and “to generate intellectual debate in the notion of comprehensive national security.” Therefore, information like the “country’s vital national security interests, priority actions, and implementation framework has not been included in this document.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> 2022. *What is the focus of Pakistan’s National Security Policy with respect to India?* January 19. Accessed January 20, 2022. <https://blog.forumias.com/pakistans-national-security-policy-and-its-impact-on-india/>.

<sup>4</sup> National Security Division, Pakistan. 2022. *National Security Policy of Pakistan 2022-2026*. Government of Pakistan.

The document claims that its foundation stone had been laid down in 2014. Its formulation included multiple rounds of consultations with various stakeholders ranging from government officials to academicians, experts, and citizens. The government of Pakistan aspires to make this a 5-year living document containing sustainable policy recommendations. At the same time, the National Security Division (NSD), with the coordination and guidance from the National Security Committee (NSC) and the Office of the National Security Advisor, will review and update the document every year, when a new government is formed, or in the aftermath of a major national or international event with far-reaching security implications for Pakistan. While the NSD is primarily responsible for the implementation of the National Security Policy, its implementation relies on inter-departmental coordination to a large extent.

The document enumerates the principles of policy implementation – whole-of-government approach, inclusivity, self-confidence and resolve, introspection, pragmatism, proactiveness, and prioritization. It talks about the challenges and opportunities in achieving that security and provides guidelines for policymaking. They aim at converting the challenges into opportunities. One cannot help but wonder how they can exploit poverty or home-grown terrorism unless they plan on exporting their home-grown terrorism to a neighbour.

This reads more like a statement of the mission/ vision/ objective of Pakistan than a policy document. The following analysis assumes that the document will not remain a dead letter and that Pakistan does mean every word of it (except for those statements that are intended to propagate a positive image of Pakistan to the international community while simultaneously tarnishing that of India's).

Except for foreign policy dynamics and human security, the challenges and guidelines were explained generically. If you “Find & Replace” Pakistan with the name of any other country, the document would still be relevant. Since it is explicitly mentioned that the public version of the document does not contain any of the specific details and the exact policy implementation mechanism, a shot in the dark is that what was published was probably more or less the

introduction part of each theme. Yet, it could be a window into the content of the 110-page classified version. There are problems with it.

1. There is nothing in the document that indicates research work of six or more years. A good portion of the text can be found in other bilateral or multilateral treaties or any other informal arrangements.
2. Understandably, the details of the implementation framework are not included in the public version of the NSP. However, if we extrapolate what they could be from the policy guidelines given in the text, there are two issues with it. First, the implementation mechanism is not Pakistan-centric. Any policy that does not consider the specific situation of the society is bound to not succeed completely or at the pace that Pakistan envisions. Second, it contains terms like “enhance,” “strengthen” and “empower”, 9, 24, and 4 times respectively. It has not given much thought to what new policies could be implemented to achieve national security.
3. Reading between the lines, Pakistan believes that if economic security is ensured, then all other forms of traditional and non-traditional security will follow. It intends to make more money and allocate it to traditional and human security needs. But what it fails to recognize is that money is not enough to secure everything. If that was the case, the United States would have been able to thwart sub-national tendencies in its territory or the insecurity arising from the geo-political location would not have continued to trouble Russia. Neither would there have been any opposition to the authoritarian tendencies and human rights violations of the People’s Republic of China. A break from the university-level textbook reading were the themes of “Foreign Policy in a Changing World” and “Human Security.” The foreign policy section provides the readers with a window into Pakistan’s foreign policy priorities and objectives even though the text is laden with common international relations jargon.

The section on human security is a testament to Pakistan’s emphasis on the policy being citizen-centric. It was the only part in the whole text that highlighted the acute problems faced by its citizens. Although the section was not as comprehensive or detailed as it should have been, the text gave an insight into the acute challenges faced by Pakistan. It was the most Pakistan-centric

part of the document. However, as a country of such vastness, more data was necessary. The document has nevertheless succeeded in giving women and transgender persons their rightful dignity at least in words.

The government's decision to formulate and publish the National Security Policy is a step in the right direction. Even though it seemed like a compilation of general challenges and calls for strengthening existing policies, the document has the potential to provide vision and direction to the policy-making process of Pakistan. For the first time, it permitted itself to take away some of its attention from India to other vital issues. The document discusses the connection between human, economic, and national security it is flawed but is the first step.

## **Implications for India: Concerns and Opportunities**

Pakistan's 'frenemy' with India is glaring in several parts of this document. While it emphasized its historic ties with most other significant countries including the United Kingdom, there was hardly any mention of India. Pakistan's choice of words to describe India and the India-Pakistan relationship is not surprising considering that the relationship is not something to be proud of.

The document has described India's defence policy as "disturbing the strategic balance in the region" because of "the expansion of India's nuclear triad," politicized and open-ended statements on nuclear policy, and utilisation of destabilising technologies. According to the policymakers of Pakistan, India is following a policy of belligerence towards Pakistan as is evidenced through "growing Indian arms build-up, . . . and exceptions in the non-proliferation rules." There is always a threat of military adventurism and non-contact warfare. Therefore, Pakistan is bound to give the policy of nuclear deterrence a central role in the security calculus of South Asia. The entire blame for the degradation of India-Pakistan ties is put on India "as a consequence of the unresolved Kashmir dispute and India's hegemonic designs." India pursues unilateral policy actions and attempts to impose one-sided solutions, thereby negatively affecting regional stability. India creates false propaganda on the Kashmir issue to show Pakistan in a negative light and hide the atrocities of "Indian occupation forces" such as "human rights abuses and oppression through war

crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocidal acts” in the so-called Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and ceasefire violations by India along the Line of Control and Working Boundary. While Pakistan is genuinely seeking to bring peace and stability to the South Asian region, India’s actions present significant hurdles. Initiatives by Pakistan to build “eastward connectivity is held hostage to India’s regressive approach.” “A regressive and dangerous ideology dripping the collective conscience in our immediate neighbourhood” which is later referred to as “Hindutva-driven politics” immensely increases the prospects of violent conflict and impacts Pakistan’s immediate security.

A document of such national importance released into the international community, even if it is destined to remain a dead letter, can impact India’s image negatively. With the publication of the document, the international community is getting another official perspective on the India-Pakistan issues written in stone aside from that of India. Now there are two opposite official perspectives on the same issue. India’s international image depends on which perspective the international community chooses to believe. Pakistan presents India as an atrocious state with hegemonic attributes, unpeaceful military intentions, and a regressive ideology. Fact-checking the veracity of these claims may be out of bounds for the layperson. Consequently, incidents that may be interpreted by India as interventions in internal or bilateral affairs could occur. For instance, many MNCs with their bases in Pakistan took to Twitter to call for the independence of Kashmir on Pakistan’s Kashmir Solidarity Day on 2 February 2022. The document shows that Pakistan has fully understood the use and scope of information technology and campaigns. India must expect and gear up for a false propaganda campaign by Pakistan and take necessary measures to counter it.

Pakistan is also scapegoating its negative projections of India’s image for its policy of nuclear deterrence. According to them, such a policy occupies a critical place in the security calculus of South Asia. Pakistan intends to use its nuclear capabilities in concert with its conventional military capabilities reinforced by all elements of national power. It glorified the importance of nuclear deterrence for regional peace. Behind the veil of nuclear deterrence and strategic stability, Pakistan may be seeking to increase its nuclear and conventional military capabilities without inviting retribution from the international community. The NSP also says that Pakistan aimed to strengthen

its naval capabilities in the light of the increasing significance of the Indian Ocean and multi-directional security challenges such as cyber intrusion, surveillance of their sea lines of communication, ensuring freedom of navigation and protection against piracy. Such policies put India in a fix. From India's perspective, this indicates a high possibility of another military confrontation since Pakistan is building up its military capabilities. On the bright side, if Pakistan is indeed genuine with the contents of the document, then one can assume that it is loaded with potential opportunities for India.

First, the normalisation of India-Pakistan bilateral relations is a major theme in the document. "A just and peaceful resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute remains a vital national security interest for Pakistan." However, Pakistan does not seem to realise that multiple interpretations of the term "just" is the major reason behind the Kashmir conflict even after more than seven decades. Pakistan also expresses its commitment to the implementation of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions regarding Kashmir. Also, even though they had denounced India's constitutionally mandated act of denying statehood to J&K as "illegal and unilateral," and as having been rejected by the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), they have not called for any reversal of the decision. Reading everything together indicates a genuine commitment on Pakistan's side to peacefully resolve the issue through dialogue and normalise bilateral relations. But finding common ground on the definition of the terms of resolution is a long-winded road that both countries must patiently and carefully tread.

Second, the document presents the normalisation of India-Pakistan relations as a prelude to regional peace and stability which is referred to as the "foremost aim of our military capability and foreign policy." It views regional peace based on mutual respect, sovereign equality, mutual co-existence, regional connectivity, and shared prosperity as the "essential prerequisites to optimising national security." Pakistan has correctly understood the importance of regional peace as a prerequisite for internal peace and stability. The document shows a willingness on its part. This is a cue for other South Asian nations to work together to revitalize the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). In moving forward, one must not forget the history of the SAARC. They must note the conditions that weakened SAARC and work towards a different approach. In this context, all the countries of the region. (especially India) will get to enjoy the



fruits of peace which they could expand to fully tap the power potential of South Asia as a whole through cooperation in diverse fields. Nibbing off terrorism is particularly important for attaining regional peace. If Pakistan could effectively eliminate its home-grown terrorist elements as it aspires to, it could have far-reaching benefits for the internal security of India as well.

Third, if the normalisation of India-Pakistan relations and regional peace become a reality, India can gain significantly from Pakistan's emphasis on economic security and citizen-centric policies. Many of Pakistan's small and medium scale businessmen rely on raw materials imported from India. Since the suspension of trade relations between the two countries following the revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status in August 2019, it has been very difficult for these entrepreneurs to source raw materials for their products. Pakistan has to reopen trade relations with India. The NSP has also highlighted the importance of achieving energy security. A cross-border collaboration with India modelled on India's hydropower energy partnership with Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal could benefit all countries in the region.

## Conclusion

Pakistan's NSP does a commendable job in comprehensively and substantively enlisting its challenges and objectives. Yet, it has its fair share of deficiencies too. Whatever Pakistan's plans are in the later stages, the immediate impact of the document on India is negative. But if India acts on Pakistan's cue of aspiring for regional peace and security, the benefits for India will be manifold. However, everything good that could come of it is conditional. All the good things enumerated above could happen only if Pakistan acts on its words.

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