



CENTRE for AEROSPACE & SECURITY STUDIES

# RECONCEPTUALISING STRATEGIC THOUGHT: THE CASE OF PAKISTAN

ISSUE PAPER 6

Air Marshal Farooq Habib (Retd)

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Edited by

**SARAH SIDDIQ ANEEL**

All correspondence pertaining to this publication should be addressed to CASS, through post or email at the following address:

**Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies**

✉ [cass.thinkers@casstt.com](mailto:cass.thinkers@casstt.com)

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*Edited by  
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## Abstract

Conflict has always remained an unavoidable part of human history. Nations gradually evolve a distinct construct of ideas and principles, called 'strategic thought' in the security lexicon, which guide its application of power in wars. Pakistan, with a long conflict legacy also adheres to certain tenets in its use of military power. Quest for alliances, extraordinary emphasis on combat training, overreliance on irregular warfare, firm resolve to fight offensively, preference of continental strategy and search for deterrence capabilities stand out as major strands of Pakistan's 'strategic thought' which simultaneously reflects its strategic culture and the desire to safeguard national interests. Some of these guiding principles have, however, lost validity in present times, necessitating a case for review. Foremost, Pakistan must pursue geoeconomics as an essential enabler of its strategic thought. Alongside, it should develop a proactive foreign policy while reinvigorating the role of the Foreign Office. There is also a need for renewed focus on air and maritime strategies while striving for an integrated military response. Subscribing to a 'whole of nation' approach while being more inclusive in getting inputs and factoring in the internal threats into Pakistan's strategic thought are essential to address the expansive challenges of hybrid war. Finally, Pakistan must embrace the opportunities offered by emerging technologies in the military domain.



# INTRODUCTION

## Introduction

Strategic thought is a frequently used term in security discourse, yet its precise and agreed-upon definition is hard to find. It may be understood as a broad concept, encompassing ideas, principles and directives which guide the use of instruments of power of a state. It may also be loosely defined as the ‘leading ideas of military and civilian strategists about the threat and the application of power to fulfil the ends of policy.’<sup>1</sup>

Conflict and use of force is an indelible part of human history. One of the earliest recorded battles in history was fought in 1457 BC between the forces of an Egyptian Pharaoh and the ruler of Kadish, in the area which forms the present day Israel. About thousand years later, Sun Tsu, in his famous treatise ‘The Art of War’, which is one of the most influential document on strategic thought, to date, remarked that war is ‘a matter of vital importance to the state; a matter of life or death, the road either to survival or to ruin.’<sup>2</sup> It is often argued that war has contributed significantly in making of modern states, as appositely reflected in the famous quote by Charles Tilly, ‘war made the state and the state made war.’<sup>3</sup> The proliferation of armed conflict in mankind’s history is also aptly summed up in Clemenceau’s famous dictum that peace is only an interlude between wars.<sup>4</sup> With war and conflict being an integral part of its existence, it is quite natural for a nation to evolve a distinct construct of the ways to conduct it in the backdrop of own experiences, and prevailing environment. Strategic thought, is indeed, an essential part of a nation’s strategic legacy.

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<sup>1</sup> Isabelle Duyvesteyn and James E. Worrall “Global Strategic Studies: A Manifesto,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 40, no.3 (2016): 347-357, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01402390.2016.1269228>.

<sup>2</sup> Sun Tzu, “The Art of War,” Translation by Lionel Giles, <http://classics.mit.edu/Tzu/artwar.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Tilly, “Reflections on the History of European State Making,” in *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, ed. Charles Tilly (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 42.

<sup>4</sup> Georges Clemenceau: “I don’t know whether war is an interlude during peace, or peace an interlude during war.”



Strategic thought involves interaction of various agencies of a state, both formal and informal. While the political leadership and military plays the most important role in formulation of strategic thought, contribution also comes from war colleges, academic institutions, think tanks etc.<sup>5</sup> While such wide array of voices and counsel, add to the richness and effectiveness of strategic thought, the inherent friction, departmental rivalry and careerism can be impediments for sound and reliable thought process.<sup>6</sup>

Strategic thought does not evolve in a vacuum. There are various factors like historical experiences, geographical compulsions, national ethos, leading ideas of the time, technology, imperatives of neorealism etc. which play important roles in development of strategic thought of a nation. Some of these factors can be summed up under the heading of 'Strategic Culture' which over the last few decades has become an increasingly popular framework to interpret a nation's strategic behaviour.

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<sup>5</sup> Reed Bonadonna, "Strategic Thought and the Military Officer," *Strategy Bridge*, August 28, 2018, <https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2018/8/28/strategic-thought-and-the-military-officer>.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



# STRATEGIC CULTURE

## Strategic Culture

Culture has long been considered an important factor in determining the strategic (military) behaviour of a people much before the concept of 'strategic culture' emerged in the security literature. About 2500 years ago, Herodotus, in his history of the wars between Greece and Persia has elucidated how 'the fruit of wisdom and strong law' embedded in former's organic democratic tradition helped them to overwhelm their rivals.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, David Pritchard also points out to the deep roots of a democratic culture that helped Athens to transform into a military superpower of those days.<sup>8</sup> Lauri Johnson, in her article has also analysed the significance of 'political and cultural differences' as well as 'national and individual characters of leaders' of Athens and Sparta in the outcome of their War as recounted by Thucydides.<sup>9</sup>

Notwithstanding, the importance attached to culture in conduct of war, a formal introduction of the term 'strategic culture' as a plausible toolkit to view strategic behaviour of a state was provided by Jack Snyder, an analyst with the Rand, in the decades of 80s in the last century. He defined it as 'the sum total of ideas, conditioned emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behaviour that members of a national strategic community have acquired through instruction or imitation and share with each other...'<sup>10</sup> In his article, he argues that the Soviet way to approach nuclear strategy, and the related issues, was quite different from that of the US policymakers. The difference, he believed, was rooted in the two very distinct set of attitudes, cultures and the way, the two countries viewed security.

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<sup>7</sup> Herodotus, *The Histories*, translation by A.D. Godley (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920), 102, cited by Ashley J. Tellis, *Understanding Strategic Cultures in the Asia-Pacific* (Washington, D.C.: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2016).

<sup>8</sup> David M Pritchard, *Article Democracy and War in Ancient Athens and Today* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 141.

<sup>9</sup> Laurie M. Johnson Bagby, "The Use and Abuse of Thucydides in International Relations," *International Organization* 48, no. 1 (1994):131-153, [https://www.jstor.org/stable/2706917?seq=17#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/2706917?seq=17#metadata_info_tab_contents).

<sup>10</sup> Jack Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Nuclear Options* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1977), 8.

A linkage between military decision-making and strategic culture is also explained by Stephen Rosen who defines the latter as 'beliefs and assumptions that frame choices about international military behaviour, particularly those concerning decisions to go to war, preferences for offensive, expansionist or defensive modes of warfare, and levels of wartime casualties that would be acceptable.'<sup>11</sup> A similar explanation was proposed by Yitzhak Klien in his article 'A Theory of Strategic Culture,' where he defines strategic culture as 'the set of attitudes and beliefs held by a military establishment concerning the political objective of war and the most effective strategy and operational method of achieving it.'<sup>12</sup>

One must however, be cautious in explaining every aspect of strategic behaviour in terms of strategic culture. History, geography, politics institutions, experience plays an important part in determining response of a strategic community but so does balance of power, alliances, technology, training, leadership and so on. Cultures, indeed are slow to change but are not everlasting. Cultural changes do take place with time which brings new ideas, knowledge, experience, inventions and systems etc.

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<sup>11</sup> Stephen Peter Rosen, *Societies and Military Power: India and its Armies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 12. Rosen focuses on the impact of the norms and structures of Indian society (Indian culture) on India's Strategic organisations (e.g., the army, the officer corps, the soldiers) cited in Peter Lavoy, "Pakistan's Strategic Culture," *Comparative Strategic Cultures Curriculum Project*, 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Yitzhak Klein, "A Theory of Strategic Culture," *Comparative Strategy* 10, no. 1, (1991): 3-23, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01495939108402827>.

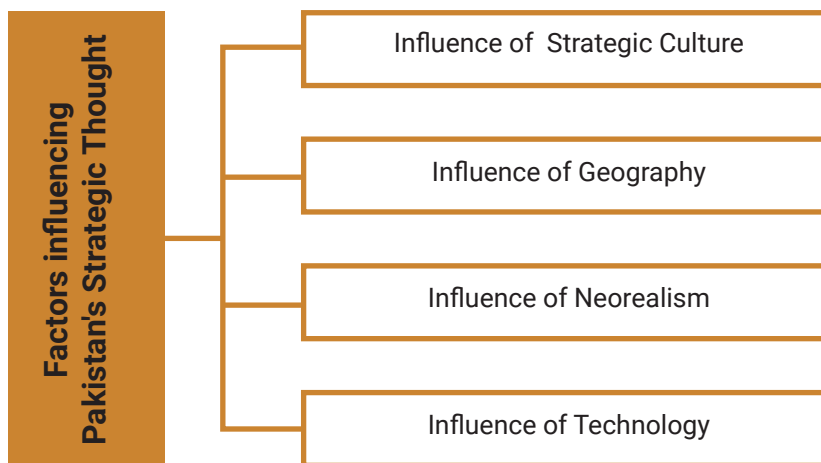


**FACTORS  
INFLUENCING  
PAKISTAN'S STRATEGIC  
THOUGHT**

## Factors influencing Pakistan's Strategic Thought

Like other nations, Pakistan's strategic thought has evolved out of various factors. It is important to study the influence of these factors in order to understand the evolution of strategic thought.

Figure 1: Factors influencing Pakistan's Strategic Thought



Source: Author's own.

## Influence of Strategic Culture

Pakistan recently celebrated its 75th independence anniversary. Starting with humble beginnings, it stands today as one of the seven overt nuclear powers in the world. The country ranks 24th in terms of its expenditure on defence,<sup>13</sup> and supports the sixth largest active armed forces,<sup>14</sup> ranked one of the finest in the world.

Located in a region marked by instability and competing interest of major powers, with a revisionist adversary in the East and an unstable Afghanistan in the West,

<sup>13</sup> "Despite Ranking 24th in Terms of Defence Spending, Pakistan Army Becomes the 9th Most Powerful \ Military in the World," *Pakistan Frontier*, January 22, 2022, <https://pakistanfrontier.com/2022/01/22>.

<sup>14</sup> Evan Hecht, "Who has the Biggest Military? Breaking it Down by Active and Reserve Members," *USA Today*, August 27, 2022, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2022/08/27/who-has-biggest-military-world-most-powerful/7888866001/>.

Pakistan has understandably, remained constantly engaged in search of security. It has a long legacy of wars and conflicts with India, endured major upheavals in Afghanistan, has withstood the consequences of a revolution in Iran and continues to battle a war from within. The experience of all these years has been a significant feature in shaping Pakistan's strategic culture. Some prominent points in this regard include:

Figure 2: Factors affecting Pakistan's Strategic Culture



Source: Author's own.

## History

History remains a dominant factor in defining Pakistan's sense of insecurity and the strategic culture. The division of subcontinent was fiercely resisted by the leaders of the Indian National Congress, though in the end, they had to succumb to the diktat of history. The shape of the country which finally emerged on the world map after the Partition was, however, 'truncated and moth eaten'<sup>15</sup> suffering from an unjust and heartless Radcliffe award and the treachery of the last viceroy, Lord Mountbatten under the influence of Congress leaders. Even after the Partition, Indian leaders could not come to grips with the creation of

<sup>15</sup> Text of Jinnah's statement in New Delhi of May 4, 1947 cited by Shuja Nawaz, "The Forever Shining Idea of Pakistan," *Dawn*, August 14, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1704844>.

Pakistan, and believed that it was a ‘temporary development to facilitate the end of British rule in India’ and that eventually (Pakistan) would be reintegrated into a greater India.<sup>16</sup> Such hostility right at the time of inception, which morphed into enormous challenges in the subsequent years cast a lasting influence on Pakistani policymakers with regards to security concerns. While there is an unending list of historical injustices and acts of aggression committed by India which contributed to influence Pakistan, a few of the major events which took place immediately in the aftermath of Partition include the influx of large number of battered refugees, India’s reneging on the agreed division of resources, illegal accession of princely states, including Kashmir and Junagarh, and strangulation of Pakistan’s agricultural system through water stoppages.

Even beyond the formative years, India continued to persist with its obduracy and hostility. For instance, in the spring of 1950, and again between July and October 1951, there were attempts by India to coerce Pakistan through concentration of its forces on the country’s borders. There were also attempts to infiltrate into Azad Kashmir and Pakistan territory on multiple occasions in addition to several airspace violations in that timeframe.<sup>17</sup>

India, meanwhile, conducted its first nuclear test (ironically named ‘Smiling Buddha’), in 1974, by diverting relevant material from its peaceful nuclear programme, forcing Pakistan to start its own course of action. Pakistan became an overt nuclear power in May 1998, in response to a series of Indian nuclear tests conducted two weeks earlier. Today, despite three all-out wars, frequent skirmishes, and various proxies, all the main issues between the two countries, including Jammu and Kashmir remain unresolved. India continues its reluctance to move toward conflict resolution on the basis of the principles of law and justice.<sup>18</sup> The current favourable geostrategic disposition has further emboldened India to disregard international norms in dealing with its neighbours.

## Defiance of Indian Design

The history of a bloody partition, illegal occupation of Jammu and Kashmir, role in dismemberment of Pakistan, frequent nefarious machinations, ranging from kinetic operations to disinformation campaigns such as EU DisinfoLab remain etched in the memories of the Pakistani nation, and has resulted in a deep sense of defiance. India’s perennial aspiration to dominate the region, partly manifested in

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<sup>16</sup> Arshad Ali, *Pakistan’s National Security Approach and Post-Cold War Security* (London: Routledge, 2021), 31.

<sup>17</sup> Pakistan Army, “War History”, <https://pakistanarmy.gov.pk/War-History.php>.

<sup>18</sup> Abdul Sattar, *Pakistan’s Foreign Policy 1947-2019: A Concise History* (Oxford University Press), 38.



its self-proclaimed role of 'net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region,'<sup>19</sup> has never been accepted by Pakistan. The orientation of policies pursued by India, as George Tanham points out, 'indicate that India's security boundaries extend beyond its territorial boundaries; these coincide with the outer territorial boundaries of the adjacent states of South Asia.'<sup>20</sup> While most South Asian countries have overtime, fell in line with Indian designs, Pakistan stands out as a country which vehemently defies the former's hegemonic aspiration. This spirit serves as a central theme of Pakistan's strategic culture shared by all sections of society.

## Dominance of Military as an Institution

Pakistan Army was an offshoot of British Indian Army which made it the oldest and most firmly established institution in Pakistan,<sup>21</sup> at the time of independence. While most institutions of the new state strived to find their footing, the Army, in spite of its scarce resources was well placed with its strong organisation and discipline to rapidly develop into a leading institution of the country. In the initial days, however, decision-making, even related to defence matters, was vested in the civilian government. The Father of the Nation M.A. Jinnah had articulated the principle of 'civilian supremacy' in his categorical statement during his visit to Staff College Quetta in January 1948. Addressing a question from an Army Officer, he replied, 'Don't forget that you in Armed Forces are the servants of the people. You do not make the national policy. It is we, the civilians, who decide the issues and it is our duty to carry out those tasks which you are entrusted.'<sup>22</sup>

However, soon after Partition, the 'hesitant decision-making and indecisive role of politicians' in the Kashmir issue, caused dissatisfaction and internal conflict within the military and fuelled the eventual expansion of its influence in Pakistan.<sup>23</sup> Eventually, the principle of civilian supremacy in state affairs underwent a transformation within a decade, or so after independence.<sup>24</sup> Four phases of direct military rule, amounting to more than three decades has almost sealed the

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<sup>19</sup> "India can be the Net Security Provider in Indian Ocean Region: Rajnath," *Business Standard*, February 4, 2021, [https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-can-be-the-net-security-provider-in-indian-ocean-region-rajnath-121020301779\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-can-be-the-net-security-provider-in-indian-ocean-region-rajnath-121020301779_1.html).

<sup>20</sup> George Tanham, "Indian Strategic Culture," *Washington Quarterly* 15, no.1 (1992): 129-142, cited by Hasan Askari, "Pakistan's Strategic Culture," in *South Asia in 2020: Future Strategic Balances and Alliances*, ed. Michael R Chalmers (Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute).

<sup>21</sup> Moshe Lissak, "Modernization and Role Expansion of Military in Developing Countries: A Comparative Analysis," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 9, no. 3 (1967): 233-255.

<sup>22</sup> Moonis Ahmer, "A Grand Dialogue", *Dawn*, August 15, 2021, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1640705/a-grand-dialogue>.

<sup>23</sup> Shuja Nawaz, *Crossed Swords: Pakistan, Its Army and the Wars Within* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 73.

<sup>24</sup> Hasan Askari, "Civil-Military Relations and National Stability in South Asia," *Pakistan Horizon* 42, no. 2 (1989):47-78.

role of Army in important national matters, especially relating to security. The role has certainly not diluted even during civilian rule. However, according to Dr Askari, a leading scholar on civil-military relations in Pakistan, the reasons for expanded military role go beyond their direct and indirect rule. It is, in his view, rooted in Pakistan's development into a security state due to grave security problems faced right in beginning; a frequent practice of calling military for civil aid; the military's successful role in internal security operations; and perceived incompetence of politicians.<sup>25</sup> To a certain extent the public acceptance of such military dominance in national affairs originate from the perception of alleged corruption of the majority of politicians, especially those who came to power after General Zia-ul-Haq. Brigadier A.R. Siddiqi (Retd) underscores yet another aspect about military's dominance, by saying that 'since there is no other institution to rival the military organisation and discipline, above all, in its control of the instruments of violence, its image grows apace, and presently reaches a point of predominance and power where it becomes an object of mass reverence or fear.'<sup>26</sup> Perhaps, this public 'reverence' for the Armed Forces, more than anything, helps to maintain its ascendancy over other national institutions. Army's monopoly in decision-making, without significant inputs from other institutions of the state, has frequently resulted in flawed decisions with regards to strategic behaviour as evident from various examples from Pakistan's history. Another consequence of such dominance is that all other sources of input for strategic thought, including academia, think tanks, civil servants and politicians, have mostly been absent from their effective contribution.

## Ideology

Pakistan was created as a separate homeland for Indian Muslims. Faith maintains a key place in Pakistani culture. In the military, the concept of 'Jihad' (holy war) and rewards of martyrdom play a vital role in motivating soldiers to fight for their country. However, beyond such significance, the role of religion in the Armed Forces during the initial years remained a matter of personal beliefs, especially in the officers' corps which inherited British military traditions. Things began to change after General Zia-ul-Haq assumed power and started to encourage the public display of religious orientation in the Army.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Hasan Askari, "Civil-Military Relations," *Express Tribune*, October 17, 2016, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1201138/civil-military-relations-3>

<sup>26</sup> A.R. Siddiqi, *The Military in Pakistan: Image and Reality* (New York: Vanguard), ii.

<sup>27</sup> Hasan Askari, "Pakistan's Strategic Culture," in *South Asia in 2020: Future Strategic Balances and Alliances*, ed. Michael R Chalmers (Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute, 2002), 311.

Religious conservatism received further boost with Pakistan's involvement in Afghan conflict which became an international effort to train, finance and equip the Afghan resistance groups, along with the private fighters from all over the Islamic world, to fight against the Soviet invaders in the name of 'Islamic Jihad'.<sup>28</sup> Pakistan's agencies, notably Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) spearheaded this effort.<sup>29</sup> The experience of Afghan Jihad and its success left an indelible mark on the Pakistan's strategic culture and 'religion became more prominent in external manifestation among members of the Armed Forces.'<sup>30</sup>

Zia's era also saw an unprecedented rise in sectarianism, in the wake of turf war between Iran and Saudi Arabia on Pakistani soil. The ideological factor in the country's policy was also visible later in Afghanistan where the emergence of Taliban, who represented the more conservative side of Islam, was backed by Pakistan along with few Arab states in their power struggle.<sup>31</sup>

Religion always had a significant influence on common people of Pakistan as well. This inclination, however, was mostly reflected in matters of personal beliefs and contributed positively to keeping tolerance and harmony within society. Zia's policies and cataclysmic events in the region changed this equation which resulted in promotion of a narrow view of religion along with sectarianism. This has only exacerbated with time. Ideology, therefore in one way or the other, has been an important part of Pakistan's strategic culture which is reflected in the choice of policies of the country over the past 75 years.

## Influence of Geography

Though located in South Asia, Pakistan has been endowed with a unique geography which connects it simultaneously to important regions of the world, including Central Asia, West Asia, Central Asia, and Middle East. The physical geography of Pakistan, however, offers few challenges as well, especially with respect to the nature of threat emanating from India.

At the time of independence, the two wings of Pakistan were separated by more than 1000 miles of Indian territory, with the Eastern wing surrounded by India from three sides making it almost indefensible. This vulnerability contributed significantly, along other more overriding factors, towards the dismemberment of

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<sup>28</sup> Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 373.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Askari, "Pakistan's Strategic Culture," 322.

<sup>31</sup> Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 479.

Pakistan in 1971. The territory which became Pakistan subsequently, shares more than 3000 km border with India (including the Line of Control (LoC) and Working Boundary) that has remained a source of insecurity in addition to the lack of depth especially in South.

Some of the major cities of Pakistan lie very close to the Eastern border making them vulnerable to Indian aggression. On the north-western side, Afghanistan refuses to accept the permanence of the border demarcated in the shape of the Durand Line. The instability in Afghanistan over the past 40+ years and inability of its government to rein in terrorist elements located in the country continues to impinge on Pakistan's security, especially in view of a porous border.

Finally, Pakistan's proximity to international sea lines and global energy corridor in the Indian Ocean, an area of interest and competition for major world powers, also increases its security concerns. This aspect has become more prominent in the wake of US-China rivalry in the recent times.

## Influence of Neorealism

The theory of 'Neorealism', with its emphasis on conflict and competition as enduring features of the international system, is perhaps the most plausible paradigm to explain and understand the strategic thought of a nation. The international order, according to neorealism is 'anarchic' and every state always acts in its own interest.

Kenneth Waltz, the chief proponent of 'Neorealism' argued that because states tend to seek security, a stable international equilibrium is possible through balancing.<sup>32</sup> Pakistan's strategic behaviour also reflects the imperative to pursue its national interest and maintain a balance of power.

Neorealism has, evidently been, one of the most compelling drivers for the decisions that Pakistan has taken over the years. Whether it was seeking defence pacts at the cost of non-alignment in the early years, pursuing a nuclear programme despite international opposition, supporting the Afghan resistance against Soviets, or joining the coalition in Afghanistan after 9/11, all these policy choices can be best understood from the perspective of Neorealism. It was again under the

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<sup>32</sup> "Neorealism in International Politics," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/realism-political-and-social-science/Neorealism-in-international-relations>.

demands of realism that Pakistan acted against militants located within own areas and also cooperated with international efforts against al-Qaeda and Taliban in Afghanistan in order to avoid the negative fallout of religious militancy back home and to comply with international demands.<sup>33</sup>

## Influence of Technology

Over the centuries, technological changes have transformed weapons and warfare.<sup>34</sup> In the same context, military strategy, and in turn, security studies have also been re-shaped by technological change.<sup>35</sup> This proposition is, of course, most pronounced in case of nuclear technology. During the Cold War, for instance, the strategy of deterrence remained dominant, guiding the development of long-range bombers and nuclear submarines.

In case of Pakistan, acquisition of nuclear capability entirely transformed the security landscape, bringing stability in the strategic matrix of the region. But even beyond nuclear weapons, technology continues to alter and shape battlefield dynamics. There is already overwhelming evidence that new advancement in technologies related to cyber warfare, space, Artificial Intelligence etc. has resulted in increased reliance on non-kinetic operations. The same technologies also impinge upon strategic balance. However, availability of expensive and advanced technologies remains an issue with countries with limited resources like Pakistan.

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<sup>33</sup> Askari, "Pakistan's Strategic Culture," 324.

<sup>34</sup> Judith Reppey, "The Technological Imperative in Strategic Thought," Review Essay, *Journal of Peace Research* 27, no. 1 (Feb. 1990), 101-106, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/423778>.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

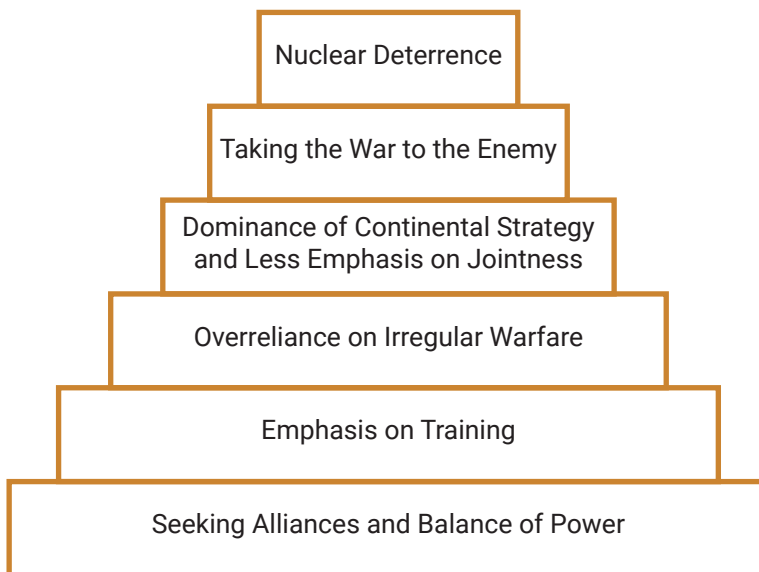


**PAKISTAN'S  
STRATEGIC THOUGHT**

## Pakistan's Strategic Thought

Pakistan's strategic thought, like that of any other country, is not a fixed set of ideas and directions. It has been evolving over the years to address the insecurity instilled by historical experiences, geographical realities and the 'tyranny of power imbalance'<sup>36</sup> in face of a much larger and hegemonic eastern neighbour. A national consensus on defiance to Indian designs and a strong connection to ideology have been effective influencers of the thought, as have been the imperatives of neorealism. Nuclear deterrence maintains a central role in strategic thought, ever since Pakistan achieved the requisite capability. The Army, being the dominant institution, has been at the forefront in the development of strategic thought at nearly all-important junctures of the country's history. Salient strands of Pakistan's strategic thought in the light of their relevance in the present-day environment are discussed in this section.

Figure 3: Strands of Pakistan's Strategic Thought



Source: Author's own.

<sup>36</sup> Sattar, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy 1947-2019*, 38.

## Seeking Alliances and Balance of Power

Foreign policy is one of the main instruments available to a state to pursue its national interests. Following independence, India's repeated attempts to coerce Pakistan forced the latter to search for defence cooperation and alliances with friendly countries in a bid to seek balance of power in the region.<sup>37</sup> Adroit diplomacy has, since been a leading element of Pakistan's strategic thought.

Pakistan forged alliances and cooperation pacts with other countries in its initial years to ensure availability of weapons and other military equipment to address critical deficiencies.<sup>38</sup> In this regard, Pakistan made purchases from 15 different countries but it could not still meet its legitimate demands.<sup>39</sup> Pakistan thus, looked to the US which was the 'only promising source of assistance' to tackle its dire needs.<sup>40</sup> Gradually, shared interests brought two countries closer, but dynamics of the Cold War were not the only reason for growing US interest in Pakistan. According to Hamza Alavi, more than Cold War politics, it was the concern to secure Western oil interests in West Asia which were threatened after Dr Moseddiq's directive to nationalise the oil industry that made the US move closer to Pakistan.<sup>41</sup> In any case, the convergence of interests resulted in a series of formal agreements, including the 'Mutual Defence Assistance Treaty' in May 1954 which cleared the way for acquisition of military equipment, weapons and training opportunities for the Armed Forces.

While Pakistan was able to address her defence needs substantially, camp politics hurt the country on two fronts. First, Pakistan developed a perennial trust deficit with the USSR which intensified, following Pakistan's role during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Second, the country became dependent on the US equipment – a vulnerability, which was exploited repeatedly by the latter in subsequent years. The Pakistan-US relationship followed a transactional pattern in the coming years. From Pakistan's perspective, close relations with the US at various junctures of history enabled the former to acquire essential economic and military support, including F-16 aircraft, and importantly, to continue the nuclear programme without much scrutiny. Similarly, Pakistan's support was critical for US interests in Afghanistan.

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<sup>37</sup> Sattar, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy 1947-2019*, 47.

<sup>38</sup> Askari, "Pakistan Strategic Culture," 315.

<sup>39</sup> Hamza Alavi, "Pakistan-US Military Alliance," *Economic and Political Weekly* 33, no. 25 (1998): 1551-1557, <https://www.epw.in/journal/1998/25/special-articles/pakistan-us-military-alliance.html>.

<sup>40</sup> Sattar, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy 1947-2019*, 41.

<sup>41</sup> Alavi, "Pakistan-US Military Alliance," 1552.



Pakistan's relation with China, in contrast, has followed a steady and unwavering path becoming a source of stability in the region.<sup>42</sup> Overtime, China has become Pakistan's major supplier of military equipment and a dependable friend in the diplomatic sphere. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) agreement signed in 2009 gave further boost to the partnership, though, the agreement is a source of concern for Washington, especially in the wake of its growing tensions with Beijing.

In the overall context, Pakistan's diplomacy in spite of certain difficulties, arising from external and internal environments has been reasonably successful, in its role to protect vital national interests and complement the furtherance of its grand strategic thought, especially with respect to preservation peace and security, promotion of meaningful cooperation at bilateral and multilateral levels and courting international goodwill. The emerging geostrategic environment, however, pose new challenges which needs careful analysis and considered decision-making.

## **Emphasis on Training**

Training, mainly a doctrinal issue, does not traditionally figure as an organic element of strategic thought. In context of Pakistan, however, given the presence of a larger and powerful adversary at the doorstep, there was a unanimity in the military leadership to pursue 'quality training' as a goal to add value to the strategic response.

Commitment to superior training and professionalism was especially critical for the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) which had started from proverbial scratch at the time of independence and had the task to confront a larger and better equipped adversary. The first Pakistani Commander-in-Chief of the PAF, Air Marshal Asghar Khan set out an 'inspirational doctrine' aimed at making the PAF an embodiment of excellence. His dictum, 'Train to fight outnumbered' has remained the catch phrase which is ingrained in the training philosophy of the PAF.<sup>43</sup>

Air Chief Marshal Jamal Ahmad Khan (Retd) recalls Asghar Khan's legacy in the following words: 'As his doctrine-premise seeped down, it was elaborated in much detail through realistic exercise scenarios, weapon acquisition policies, commander-selection criteria, organisational corrections, training standardisation

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<sup>42</sup> Sattar, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy 1947-2019*, 79.

<sup>43</sup> Jamal A Khan, "Air Force Patriarch Leaves Deep Imprint," *News International*, January 7, 2018, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/265584-air-force-patriarch-leaves-deep-imprint>.

and the establishment of the Fighter Leaders School...<sup>44</sup> He further wrote that 'consequently, when the 1965 war broke out, the Air Force was seen to be the most well-trained and effectively applied arm of the national defence.'<sup>45</sup> A glorious example of superior training regime was demonstrated on 27 February 2019, when in an aerial encounter, PAF pilots shot down two Indian Air Force (IAF) fighters. The incident deterred the Indian leaders to further escalate the conflict, thus, conceding the significance of training as a component of deterrence.

The clear vision of 'achieving excellence in combat' while fighting outnumbered is equally visible in the training doctrines of Pakistan Army and Navy as well. The Armed Forces of Pakistan have developed efficient and practical systems to accomplish their training objectives. The tactical account of Pakistani forces in all wars certainly justify the value of the training regimes, notwithstanding the various mistakes committed at higher levels.

Training must continue to hold a vital position in Pakistan's strategic thought. There is need to embrace new concepts and technologies to provide impetus to this vital attribute. The aspects of reinvigorating the intellectual and moral aspects of training would be discussed in later sections.

## ■ Overreliance on Irregular Warfare

The battle legacy of Pakistan illustrates a conspicuous preference for irregular warfare and low-intensity operations without the involvement of regular troops. The first such operation was undertaken just two months after independence, when in order to prevent India from forcibly taking Jammu and Kashmir, raids were launched to infiltrate untrained tribesmen (along with other irregulars) with an aim to cut off the road linking Kashmir to India.<sup>46</sup>

Another irregular operation by the name of 'Gibraltar' was planned in July 1965 under the chairmanship of Foreign Secretary Aziz Ahmed, who also headed the Kashmir Cell, with a plan to infiltrate trained 'guerrillas' and irregulars into Kashmir to support a popular uprising.<sup>47</sup> The operational planning was left to GOC 12 Division, while the Army as an institution had little part in the campaign, as reflected in General Gul Hasan's statement that, 'Instead of gearing up all the agencies in GHQ to prepare them for the inevitable (war), the problem was conveniently

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Nawaz, *Crossed Swords: Pakistan, Its Army, and the Wars Within*, 48.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 204.

deflected on HQ 12 Division...<sup>48</sup> The underlying assumption that the conflict will remain geographically limited proved wrong when India crossed the international border on 6 September 1965 starting an all-out war.

Yet again, in 1999, 'Operation Koh-e-Paima' was launched in Kargil with the help of irregular troops with an aim to internationalise the Jammu and Kashmir issue. The operation reflected a lack of coordination between key stakeholders with little flow of information needed for decision-making.<sup>49</sup> It failed to achieve its objectives and, in the end, was 'no longer diplomatically or militarily tenable'<sup>50</sup> resulting in serious consequences for Pakistan.

The underlying objective behind all three irregular operations was to keep the conflicts geographically localised while avoiding an all-out war with India. It was assumed that India would not 'strike back heavily'<sup>51</sup> which it did, incidentally, on all three occasions. As Nasim Zehra points out, the planners in these operations 'were overcome by desires and sentiments that prevented them from fully appreciating the realities.'<sup>52</sup> Besides the common problems associated with these operations, there is another aspect specifically related to irregular and Low Intensity Conflict (LIC), especially those planned by a handful of officers circumventing the existing process of planning.

Military everywhere in the world have rigorous planning mechanisms which include series of tests and evaluations based on robust military methodology to ascertain the validity of a plan before it is approved for action. Irregular operations sometimes follow a different path. Conceived and planned by a small group of officers, the stress on the confidentiality of a plan often means that it escapes the usual rigour of military scrutiny to assess its viability. Moreover, its ownership remains an issue as various branches and departments within the Service as well as the government remain oblivious to its necessity. That is why, the efficacy of such warfare has remained under question by experts. For instance, MRL Smith notes that 'LIC possesses the capacity to insulate politicians, from the implications of certain military challenges because they are deemed to be low intensity and therefore, of low importance, and thus, not confronting with serious intent.'<sup>53</sup> Unlike

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<sup>48</sup> Gul Hassan Khan, *Memoirs of Lt. Gen. Gul Hassan Khan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 223, cited by Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 207.

<sup>49</sup> Nasim Zehra, *From Kargil to the Coup: Events that Shook Pakistan* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2018), 440.

<sup>50</sup> Zehra, *From Kargil to the Coup*.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 463.

<sup>53</sup> MRL Smith, *Guerrillas in the Mist: Reassessing Strategy and Low Intensity Warfare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 24.

a conventional conflict which consumes every aspect of national resources, such operations are often managed by a smaller segment of decision-making machinery which makes them vulnerable to blunders and personalised follies. Discussing the US preference for such conflicts in the early 1960s, Harry Summers observed that 'Counterinsurgency became not so the US Army's doctrine as Army's dogma, and stultified military's strategic thinking for the next decade...'<sup>54</sup> For policymakers, Summers argued, LIC tends to 'obscure the nature of the task and obfuscates what needs to be done.'<sup>55</sup>

The covert operations undertaken by Pakistan during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as a part of international efforts also suffered from the problems mentioned above. The ISI, in close cooperation with its American counterpart (CIA), was the chief architect of these operations.<sup>56</sup> While local Afghans formed a major part of the Mujahideen, a large number of foreign fighters from Pakistan and Arab countries were also attracted to participate in what was being propagated as 'Islamic Jihad' against the Soviet infidels. The operations involved training, planning, handling logistics and psychological dimensions of war deputed to different branches of the ISI.<sup>57</sup> In all these operations, the top brass of the Army, including the Chief of General Staff (CGS), was not actively involved.<sup>58</sup> Even foreign policy issues, related to Afghanistan, were managed by the ISI under direct supervision of President Zia without the involvement of the Foreign Office.<sup>59</sup> In the end, it was no one's war, one, without declared objectives. The unintended consequences of the conflict continue to haunt Pakistan even today.

## **Dominance of Continental Strategy and Less Emphasis on Jointness**

Pakistan's has displayed a strong preference towards continental strategy in its strategic behaviour since inception. This can be attributed to the fact that Jammu and Kashmir which has been the root cause of the conflict with India is essentially a territorial issue. Moreover, there has been an overriding geographical context to Pakistan's military involvement on the Western front, whether it was fighting the proxy fomented by Afghanistan in the early years; aiding Afghan resistance against Soviets; or fighting the war against militants and terrorists operating from both sides of the border. Such territorial conflicts, arguably, favoured a continental strategy to be in the lead, with air and naval instruments mostly confined to

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<sup>54</sup> Harry Summers, *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (Novato: Presidio Press, 1995), 73.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>56</sup> Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 373.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 374.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 373-374.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 374.

supporting roles. However, the indifference to the requirement of integrating air and naval forces can be gauged from the fact that at a few instances, major operations were planned without even consulting these supporting arms. One such incident was mentioned by Air Marshal Nur Khan, in an interview, in which he revealed that as Air Force Commander, he was not taken into confidence about Operations Gibraltar and Grand Slam.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, the Kargil operation in 1999 was also planned without taking the sister services into confidence.

The misplaced emphasis on a particular service strategy and lack of joint planning in military operations work against an optimum and unified response mechanism to the existing threat. Additionally, the absence of a requisite structured organisation and mechanism precludes formation and application of a joint strategy in the real sense. Joint strategy, it may be emphasised is the contemporary way to fight a war. In the present context, the Indian Armed Forces' modernisation; induction of new technologies; and geostrategic environment emphasise a more jointed approach to warfare. Without such transformation in doctrine, a decisive advantage in the military arena cannot be expected. A perpetual notion of primacy of a particular strategy, therefore, needs to be discarded.

## ■ Taking the War to the Enemy

India has enjoyed numerical superiority against Pakistan in conventional domain right from the beginning. This was exacerbated by serious geographical vulnerabilities, especially in shape of two separate wings apart by 1000 miles of Indian territory. The Western half had an advantage with regards to interior lines vis-à-vis India, however, it lacked depth at critical places which made it vulnerable to deep offensive from the enemy. The defence of the Eastern wing which was surrounded by India from three sides was a difficult preposition. Pakistan had thus, resorted to the dictum that 'Defence of East lies in the West' implying that any reverses on the Eastern theatre would be traded by own gains on the Western side.<sup>61</sup> A 'riposte' or an offensive manoeuvre in the Western theatre remained an integral part of Pakistan's military plan with an aim to take the initiative with a deep push inside Indian territory while the defending corps hold back the Indian advance.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> "Nur Khan Reminisces '65 War," *Dawn*, September 6, 2005, <https://www.dawn.com/news/155474/nur-khan-reminisces-65-war>.

<sup>61</sup> Kaiser Tufail, *In the Ring and on its Feet: Pakistan Air Force in the 1971 Indo-Pak War*, (Lahore: Ferozsons, 2018), 38.

<sup>62</sup> Francisco Augilar, Randy Bell, Natalie Black, Sayce Falk et al. *An Introduction to Pakistan Military*, report (Massachusetts: Harvard Kennedy Centre, 2011), 10.

After the fall of Dacca, while the old dictum no longer remained valid, the Pakistan military continued to retain the 'riposte' as an important part of its military strategy to have a better bargaining position at the end of a war. The strategy was put to test during Exercise Brasstacks (1986-87), a war game involving unusually high number of Indian forces, conducted in the Rajasthan sector close to the Pakistan border. The threatening posture of Indian forces was interpreted by Pakistan as a prelude to a deep penetration manoeuvre with an aim to bifurcate the latter.<sup>63</sup>

Pakistan responded to Indian mobilisation by placing its strike formations close to 'relatively undefended underbelly of Indian Punjab'<sup>64</sup> for a riposte. The crisis eventually subsided after President Zia visited India during his famous 'Cricket Diplomacy' to watch a cricket match and met Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, but it validated the efficacy of riposte. The idea of riposte received further impetus after the large-scale military exercise 'Zarb-e-Momin' in 1989 when Pakistan military adopted the concept of 'Offensive-Defence' which remained the main strategy for a long time.

Thus, despite its force differential and smaller size, Pakistan has always sought to take the imposed war into Indian territory. This line of thinking has brought in an offensive approach into Pakistan's strategic response which must remain a vital part of the state's strategic thought in the future as well.

## Nuclear Deterrence

A state's desire to seek nuclear arms can be explained in terms of the theory of 'Realism' which argues that a state needs to rely on 'self-help' to protect its sovereignty and national interests. Extending the same argument, a state must also balance against any rival state that develops nuclear weapons by gaining access to a nuclear deterrent.<sup>65</sup> With India's test of its nuclear device in May 1974, Pakistan was faced with an insecurity dilemma which necessitated embarking upon the nuclear path. While arguably, Pakistan achieved operational success by cold testing its nuclear device as early as 1983,<sup>66</sup> it maintained a state of ambiguity much like India, about its nuclear status. During this period, the Indian restraint in initiating an all-out war against Pakistan, especially during Operations

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<sup>63</sup> Irum Khalid, "Brasstacks Crisis 1986-87," *South Asian Studies* 27, no. 1, (2012), 37.

<sup>64</sup> Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 392.

<sup>65</sup> Scott Sagan, "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Three Models of the Bomb," *International Security* 21, no. 3: 54-86, cited in Marlene Da Cruz, "Why Do States Acquire Nuclear Weapons? A Theoretical Framework in Assessing Nuclear Proliferation in Israel, Iran, and Saudi Arabia," *Political Analysis* 21 (2020):1-19.

<sup>66</sup> Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 490.

Brasstacks, is often credited to Pakistan's undeclared nuclear capability. On 11 May 1998, India tested three nuclear devices at Pokhran, followed by two more on 13th May. Pakistan responded with five tests on 28 May 1998 at Chagai, Balochistan followed by another, two days later at Kharan. Ever since, nuclear deterrence has been in place in the subcontinent, which has shown its stability through testing times, including Kargil (1999), Operation Parakaram (2001-02) and Pulwama (2019).

Large-scale mobilisation of Indian forces known as 'Operation Parakaram' in 2001-02 in retaliation to the attack on its Parliament was the last Indian attempt to engage Pakistan in full-scale war. The protracted mobilisation could not achieve any objectives, and India had to finally order a withdrawal. Frustrated with the futility of its traditional time-consuming mobilisation manoeuvre, India then came up with the 'Cold Start Doctrine' (CSD) which envisaged swift mobilisation by Army groups already stationed close to the border aiming at shallow objectives inside Pakistan's border, without in theory, breaching the nuclear threshold.<sup>67</sup> To paraphrase, Lt General Kidwai, CSD was an Indian attempt to find space for conventional war at the tactical level.<sup>68</sup>

On the conventional domain, Pakistan responded by developing its New Concept of War Fighting (NCWF) which negates the Indian advantage of swift mobilisation by re-locating and re-articulating its forces, while retaining the option of offensive manoeuvres. On the nuclear front, Pakistan developed low-yield nuclear weapons and a delivery system (Nasr) to plug the gap at the tactical level of war,<sup>69</sup> thus, completing what is called 'Full Spectrum Deterrence', or deterrence at all levels of war.

While its civilian and military leaders still continue to indulge in provocative rhetoric against Pakistan from time to time, India has desisted from any significant military operation under the nuclear overhang. Nuclear deterrence would continue to form the main pillar of Pakistan's strategic thought.

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<sup>67</sup> Hafeez Ullah Khan and Ijaz Khalid, "Indian Cold Start Doctrine, Pakistan's Policy Response," *Journal of Research Society of Pakistan* 55, no.1 (2018): 325-341.

<sup>68</sup> General Khalid Kidwai, "A Conversation with Gen. Khalid Kidwai," (speech, Carnegie International Nuclear Policy Conference, Washington, D.C., March 23, 2015), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, <https://carnegieendowment.org/files/03-230315carnegieKIDWAI.pdf>.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.



**RECONCEPTUALISATION  
OF STRATEGIC THOUGHT**



## Reconceptualisation of Strategic Thought

At the end of the day, a sound strategic thought must be able to justify the cause that it was meant to serve, i.e., best use of the military instrument to secure policy objectives. In the last 76 years, Pakistan has faced major security challenges both, on the internal and external fronts. Pakistan's response to these challenges points out to certain shortcomings and few outright failures indicative of several serious flaws in the state's strategic thought which have been identified earlier.

These failings necessitate a reconceptualisation of Pakistan's strategic thought in the light of present-day realities. While a change in few contours of strategic thought is not an unusual phenomenon - all dynamic nations undergo this transformation, the process is generally, more evolutionary than radical. The time-tested tenets which have proved their worth must be retained, while those which are not in sync with the present environment need to be replaced. The following paragraphs explain the changes which are deemed necessary to make Pakistan's strategic thought more responsive to the existing challenges.

## Geoeconomics as Prime Enabler of Strategic Response

Pakistan has remained tied to looking at its security issues from a single lens of 'geostrategy' for most of its existence. In the long run, this approach has limited the country's options of effectively addressing its security goals. Realising this shortcoming, the National Security Policy (NSP) 2022-2026 outlined an approach which seeks 'a geo-economic vision to supplement the focus on geo-strategy', with an aim to 'expand the national resource pie.'<sup>70</sup> This pivot is expected to unhinge more options to address the security challenges. Pakistan's current declining economic indicators point towards a widening gap between the policy ends and available means. In that sense, primacy of geoeconomics emerges as the chief enabler of any worthwhile strategic thought. Only an economically independent and prosperous Pakistan is more likely to effectively handle the issues of security. Hence, future strategic thought must emanate from a vision of an economically stable Pakistan.

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<sup>70</sup> "National Security Policy of Pakistan 2022-2026," National Security Division, Government of Pakistan, <https://onsa.gov.pk/assets/documents/polisys.pdf>.

## Proactive Diplomacy with Central Role of the Foreign Office

Focussed and effective diplomacy has been a hallmark of Pakistan in the past. However, in the recent times, 'the approach to foreign policy has been of crisis management by making stop-gap arrangements.'<sup>71</sup> The international environment in the wake of Sino-US confrontation; US Indo-Pacific Strategy; and domestic political and economic instability have put additional pressure on Pakistan's foreign policy which appears to have become largely reactive.

While the international and regional environments are not expected to change in the near future, there is a certainly a need to put own house in order to provide strength to foreign policy. There is also a need to curtail the role of 'supra-parliamentary institutions in operationalisation of foreign policy'<sup>72</sup> and follow the institutionalised process of policy formation. For this to happen, the role of both military and civilian leadership is critical which must understand the negative fallout of the culture of ignoring the professionally sound inputs based on long-term perspective given by the Foreign Service while formulating policy in favour of short-sighted options.<sup>73</sup> Diplomats are known to be the first line of defence of any country, and Pakistan must also make optimal use of this critical resource to further Pakistan's strategic interests.

## Renewed Focus on Air & Maritime Strategy and Jointness

The traditional focus on continental strategy needs a revision in the wake of new realities. While Jammu and Kashmir still remains the core issue between the two countries, India has been actively pursuing modernisation of its air and naval power. For instance, the capital outlay (allocation for the new acquisition) in the Defence Budget 2021-2022 reveals maximum share for the IAF, to the tune of USD 7.43 billion, followed by Navy (USD 6.36 billion) and the Army (USD 4.28 billion).<sup>74</sup> This prioritisation clearly indicates the central role of Air Force and Navy in future Indian design. The US acceptance of India as net provider of security in the Indian Ocean and beyond, has further boosted India's strategic aspirations in the Indian

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<sup>71</sup> Najm us Saqib, "Challenges of Pakistan Foreign Policy," *Nation*, September 26, 2022, <https://www.nation.com.pk/19-Sep-2022/challenges-of-pakistan-foreign-policy>.

<sup>72</sup> Ejaz Hussain, "The Military and Foreign Policy in Pakistan, An Analysis," in *Pakistan's Foreign Policy Contemporary Developments and Dynamics*, ed. Ghulam Ali (New York/London: Routledge, 2023), 63-82.

<sup>73</sup> Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, "The First Line of Defence," *News International*, July 20, 2020, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/689213-the-first-line-of-defence>.

<sup>74</sup> Vivek Raghunshi, "India unveils New Defense Budget aimed at Promoting a Self-Reliant Industry," *Defence News*, February 3, 2022, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/asia-pacific/2022/02/03/india-unveils-new-defense-budget-aimed-at-promoting-a-self-reliant-industry/>.

Ocean Region (IOR) with an aim to expand its security perimeter from the Strait of Malacca to the Strait of Hormuz and from the African coast to the Australian Western coast.<sup>75</sup> A former Indian Naval Chief, Admiral Sunil Lamba, had announced in 2018, that the Indian Navy was eyeing 200 warships and 500 aerial assets in future.<sup>76</sup> A strong Indian Naval and aerial presence in IOR, impinges upon Pakistan's security especially in view of its dependence on Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) passing from Strait of Hormuz and Strait of Malacca. Additionally, with India's emphasis on non-contact warfare as outlined in its doctrines, and development / acquisition of large number of surface-to-surface and air-to-surface missiles, the traditional prolonged and unexposed land manoeuvre becomes questionable.

The above developments in the Indian design clearly calls for a renewed focus on maritime and air strategies to support the joint strategy along with transformation of military doctrine. Without such change, Pakistan's strategic thought will remain unable to effectively address the threat scenario of the future.

## Whole-of-Nation Approach

The offensive-defensive doctrine articulated by Indian NSA, Ajit Doval in 2014, continues to serve as the central instrument employed by the Indians to pursue their strategic objectives against Pakistan without engaging in a traditional military conflict. A more common nomenclature for such operations is 'Hybrid War', which gets a special mention in the Joint Indian Armed Forces Doctrine (JIAFD) published in 2107 as it acknowledges an 'overarching role of information warfare (including cyberspace), space and special operations in support of modern day military operations at strategic, operational and tactical levels.'<sup>77</sup> Similarly, the Indian Army Land Warfare Doctrine (IALWD) also stresses upon the 'hybrid and non-contact warfare' which it says 'will be ensured in all dimensions, at all stages, and in all sectors of conflict.'<sup>78</sup>

A large part of the 'hybrid' and 'non-contact' conflict which the two Indian doctrines recurrently mention is already being waged against Pakistan with a strategic objective to create despondency, and eventually force the country to give up on its legitimate interests and submit to New Delhi's will. It is being conducted

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<sup>75</sup> Fatima Qamar and Asma Jamshed, "The Political and Economic Significance of Indian Ocean: An Analysis," *South Asian Studies* (Spring 2015): 19-20, [http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/csas/PDF/5%20Qamir%20Fatima\\_30\\_2.pdf](http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/csas/PDF/5%20Qamir%20Fatima_30_2.pdf).

<sup>76</sup> "India to Start building Third Aircraft Carrier in Three Years, Admiral Sunil Lamba," *Deccan Times*, December 3, 2018, <https://www.deccanherald.com/national/navy-looking-inducting-56-706179.html>.

<sup>77</sup> Department of Defence, "Indian Armed Forces Joint Warfare Doctrine."

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

at various fronts, simultaneously, by exploiting national vulnerabilities across various domains.<sup>79</sup> This war is targeted not only against the state of Pakistan but against all entities of the society starting from 'individual and household to tribes and communities, civil society, public institutions, corporate entities, industrial hubs, cognitive domain, cyberspace, means of communication, law enforcement agencies and armed forces both in the barracks and in the defined battlefield.'<sup>80</sup> This involves coordinated employment of both non-kinetic and kinetic instruments of powers belonging to military, political, economic, civilian and informational (MPECI) domains at different stages to achieve the desired results. The more significant non-kinetic part is characterised by psychological warfare, cyber operations, diplomatic and political manoeuvring, disinformation, deception, and economic strangulation. The media propaganda and war of narratives is central to such warfare.<sup>81</sup> Besides the physical effect of this hybrid war which are by no measure ordinary, its psychological aspects on society are enormous. The widening fissures, increasing despondency and loss of direction are but few manifestations of the toll of incessant Indian onslaught in the informational domain.

Countering such designs require 'whole of nation' and 'whole of society' approaches,<sup>82</sup> with an aim to build the resilience against enemy onslaught, especially related to media war. Militaries, no matter how strong they are, cannot handle this war alone. The 'whole of nation' approach is an elaborate set of measures based on 'growing interplay between military responses, law enforcement actions, and people-centred initiatives.'<sup>83</sup> The extent of present-day hybrid war being waged on Pakistan calls for full participation of all communities to build up a resilient response. However, in the current environment, a key obstacle to such an approach is the prevailing socioeconomic and political landscape of the country. A socially despaired, economically challenged and politically isolated person is unlikely to become an effective partner in the effort against any hybrid threat. While discussion on the imperatives of reforms, which can significantly alter the present socioeconomic conditions of the people as well as the political sphere, is beyond the scope of this paper, no significant progress in mobilising the nation to stand against the enormous hybrid threat is envisaged without such restructuring.

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<sup>79</sup> Lt. General Aamer Riaz (Retd), "Countering Hybrid Warfare: Pakistan's Response Options," (talk delivered at webinar on 'Hybrid Warfare Against Pakistan: Challenges and Response Options,' organised by Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies), February 18, 2021.

<sup>80</sup> Ehsan Mehmood Khan, "Hybrid Warfare: A Conceptual Perspective," *Hilal Magazine*, <https://www.hilal.gov.pk/eng-article/hybrid-warfare:-a-conceptual-perspective/MjYz.html>.

<sup>81</sup> Farah Naz, "Narrative Warfare," in *Living Under Hybrid War*, ed. Ashfaque H Khan and Farah Naz, (Islamabad: NUST Press, 2022).

<sup>82</sup> "The New Century Dynamics of Hybrid Warfare," Webinar organised by NUST Institute of Policy Studies, March 2021.

<sup>83</sup> Sabah Uddin, "A Whole of Nation Approach," *Daily Times*, January 12, 2021, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/712322/a-whole-of-nation-approach/>.

Another aspect of whole of nation approach relates to seeking and honouring the valid inputs on strategic thought from all relevant quarters including governmental agencies, academic institutions, think tanks, intelligentsia etc. Such contribution has been hitherto missing in Pakistan's strategic culture, unlike various other countries. For instance in the US, people like Bernard Brodie, Thomas Schelling and Albert Wohlstetter who worked with RAND Corporation, became the chief architects of thought which guided the development of US Nuclear Strategy.<sup>84</sup>

Similarly, in many parts of the world, especially in the developed countries, think tanks have traditionally played an important role in world in contributing towards development of strategic thought. In fact, 'the relationship between think tanks and defence reveals a symbiotic history that could go a long way towards explaining their interdependency.'<sup>85</sup> In the US culture, owing to their many years of experience, vast resources and smooth relations between the state and the military, think tanks, especially the ones related to defence, security and international relations, continue to track relevant information and suggest solutions to the issues at hand. In the present environment of hybrid warfare, which entails war of ideas and opinions, think tanks play an important part in the war effort as generators of ideas and opinions. Pakistan's strategic thought must include inputs and ideas from a more inclusive group of agencies.

## ■ Factoring in Internal Threats

Pakistan has been a strategically challenged state from the moment of its creation.<sup>86</sup> Since most of the threats facing the country at inception had an external orientation, as discussed earlier, the task of ensuring security at its borders became the most important function, overshadowing most other roles of the state. In the wake of such prioritisation, internal challenges were overlooked, though these had started to emerge soon after independence. Break-up of East Pakistan was a result of internal challenges ignored over a long period of time. Even after that debacle, Pakistan did not fully acknowledge its growing internal instability as a clear and present threat.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Marc Trachtenberg, "Strategic Thought in America 1952-66," *Political Science Quarterly* 4, no. 2 (1989), 301-334, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2151586>.

<sup>85</sup> Olivier Urrutia, "The Role of Think Tanks in Definition and Application of Defence Policies and Strategies," *Magazine of the Spanish Institute of Strategic Studies*, 3, <https://revista.ieee.es/article/download/340/572>.

<sup>86</sup> Munir Akram, "Revering Strategic Shrinkage," in *Pakistan Beyond the Crisis State*, ed. Maleeha Lodhi, (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2011), pp. 283-304.

<sup>87</sup> Raza Rumi, *Charting Pakistan's Internal Security Policy*, report (Washington, D.C: United States Institute of Peace), <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR368-Charting-Pakistans-Internal-Security-Policy.pdf>.

Consequently, the threat of violent extremism, religious militancy and nationalist secessionism achieved monstrous proportions. Even when the state finally moved in to eliminate these threats, only the kinetic instrument was effectively used while others lagged behind. The enormity of these challenges did enact a change of thinking in the Pakistan Army which came to identify internal turmoil as the biggest challenge to Pakistan's security.<sup>88</sup> However, these problems continued to be viewed from a single lens of military application. While over a period of time, various policy measures and supporting frameworks including establishment of National Counter Terrorism Authority, (NACTA), National Internal Security Policy (NISP), National Action Plan (NAP) and Revised National Action Plan (RNAP), were endorsed to complement the military prong, they have remained effectively dormant. Most of these efforts could not permeate into Pakistan's strategic thought and remained largely ineffective due to various reasons, including absence of ownership, lack of coordination between federation and its units and issue of intelligence sharing between various agencies. It is, therefore, necessary to factor in the various dimensions of internal threats in their entirety within Pakistan's strategic thought.

## Innovative Use of Technology

The world is experiencing a revolution in emergence of new technologies, also sometimes referred to as 'disruptive' technologies. Many of these technologies have shown great promise in the military domain as well. The European Defence Agency identifies six such technologies which include quantum-based technologies; Artificial Intelligence (AI); robotics & autonomous weapon systems; big data analytics; hypersonic weapons systems & space technologies; and new advanced materials.<sup>89</sup> The US further includes Directed Energy Weapons (DEWs) and biotechnology to the European list.<sup>90</sup> There are other technologies as well, including cyber, unmanned aerial systems and underwater vehicles which have effective military use. As evident by the battlefield usage of some technologies in recent conflicts, these have the potential to offset relative asymmetries for the developing countries, arguably sometimes at comparatively affordable costs. Harnessing this potential requires a high degree of scientific and technological base in the country, which is currently missing in Pakistan. However, a coordinated and structured effort must begin in order to remain relevant in the field of defence. This is especially required in view of the focused and intense Indian drive to

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<sup>88</sup> Salma Malik, "Pakistan's Security Challenges and Problems in the Next Decade," *E-International Relations*, February 4, 2016, <https://www.e-ir.info/2016/02/04/pakistans-security-challenges-and-problems-in-the-next-decade/>.

<sup>89</sup> European Parliament, "Emerging Disruptive Technologies in Defence," [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2022/733647/EPRS\\_ATA\(2022\)733647\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2022/733647/EPRS_ATA(2022)733647_EN.pdf).

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

weaponise these technologies. In the short term, Pakistan must seek access to these technologies from available resources with a sense of urgency since doors to access may close soon.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, mere acquisition would not be enough, they must be employed optimally in right weapon systems and must be applied with a sound strategy and codified in a relevant doctrine in order to fully harness their potential. Hence, looking at the direction of future warfare, the innovative use of technology must become a permanent element of Pakistan's strategic thought.

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<sup>91</sup> Najib Zaidi, "Military Technologies, Fifth Generation Warfare and Policy Implications for Pakistan," *Pakistan Politico*, January 15, 2015, <https://pakistanpolitico.com/military-technologies-fifth-generation-warfare-and-policy-implications-for-pakistan/>.



# CONCLUSION



## Conclusion

Pakistan's strategic thought, like that of any other country, has evolved gradually under the influence of its strategic culture as well as the determinants of neorealism. A review of the country's strategic performance over the years, however, points to some glaring flaws in strategic thought, leading to its inability to address existing security challenges. Many of these shortcomings arise from a failure to learn from past mistakes. There is, indeed, a need to reconceptualise Pakistan's strategic thought in light with the new realities and emerging environments.

As a first step the state's focus should remain in pursuing geoeconomics as an enabler of strategic thought. There is also a requirement to follow a more institutionalised process of foreign policy formulation. While discarding the traditional emphasis on continental strategy, Pakistan needs to put more focus on air and maritime strategies with emphasis on bringing jointness in response. Importantly, Pakistan needs a whole of nation approach to be adopted in order to counter the kind of hybrid war being waged against it. This also means expanding the contribution of new ideas and thoughts from a wide array of institutions. Moreover, in view of the enormity of the internal challenges, these must not be dealt with in isolation, rather should be factored in pragmatically in the strategic thought. Finally, there must be serious short-term and long-term efforts to harness the potential of disruptive technologies in the country's security calculus.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Air Marshal Farooq Habib (Retd) joined the Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies, Islamabad as Senior Director in February 2022. A graduate of National Defence University and Air War College, he has 36 years' experience of military aviation as fighter pilot in the Pakistan Air Force. He holds Master's Degrees in Strategic Studies and Defence & Strategic Studies.

During his service with the PAF, he has held various Command and Staff appointments including Commandant of Air War College, Deputy Chief of Air Staff Training, Deputy Chief of Air Staff Personnel and Vice Chief of Air Staff. He has also commanded the first contingent of Pakistan Aeronautical Complex to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. An alumnus of the Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (USA), his areas of expertise include National Security with emphasis on traditional security threats and response options; Doctrine and Policy; Governance and Public Policy. He lectures regularly at National Defence University and Air War College on related subjects.

He is a recipient of Hilal-i-Imtiaz (Military) for his services to the PAF.



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