National Security in Peril:
Challenges and Comprehensive Remedies

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2. Challenges to National Security

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Essay

Is it possible for a nation to feel secure in an age when the threats it faces are invisible yet insidious? From Cyber-attacks to climate change, the 21st century has redefined what it means to confront peril; forcing us to ask: How can we safeguard our future? Due to rise of globalization and an increasing race of getting the best possible, the threats to the existence of humans, states, and community has also increased. In today's world, the vulnerabilities of a state not only lies at its borders, but also within its digital networks, its climate, its economic endeavours, and its societal divided. In such an unconventional scenario, states are trying hard to develope such national security frameworks which are equipped to face these emerging threats. In the contemporary era, certain political, military, economic, ecological and technological challenges are posing threats to the national security of Pakistan. Instant remedies are strengthening national integration, addressing climate related security Risks, Reforming intelligence and defense strategies, adopting to Asymmetric

warfare, and strengthening multi-lateral cooperation.

Certain political challenges pose great threats to the national security of Pakistan. Firstly, there is disharmony among the federating units of the country. The provinces are all at odds on matters like water conflict, and regarding their share in NFC Award. Provinces like Punjab and Sindh have a long history of leveling allegations against each other. Sindh blames Punjab for depriving share of water under 1991 Indus River System Authority (IRSA). Secondly, the rise of militant and insurgent groups in areas like Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa also pose a sever threat to National sy security. Apart from fights at the borders, the state has also to deal with Tehrik-Taliban Pakistan, Lashkar-e-Islami in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baloch Liberation Army, Balochistan Liberation United front, and Al Qaeda in Balochistan. According to the 'National Security Report 2023' by Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies, around 90 people were killed in Insurgent attacks during the year 2023. In the same way, the country is also dealing with its perception as a terrorist state on global level.

Although, Pakistan is the only state which suffered a lot because of War on terror during 2001-2021. but still it has helped with all its might to combat terrorism. But after all the efforts of years, its image is still stained with terrorism. Certain policy makers in United States and other countries think the Pakistan is a safe haven for Afghan Taliban and supports the Haqqani group. All such allegation has made Pakistan lose its prestige among in global community. Lastly, we have a number of governance issues. The law enforcement department are plagued by corruption.which ultimately lead to weak writ of state. So, all these challenges pose severe threat to the national security.

Pakistan's National security is also in danger due to some conventional military challenges. Firstly, there is rise of sub-nationalist groups. India's involvement in Balochistan and former FATA by promoting subnationalism and proxy wars is a matter of concern for the policy makers. Secondly, the threat of India's growing influence in the Indian Ocean Region is also a matter of concern. Pakistan lies in the proximity of strait of Hormuz and Bay of Bengal, and its EEZ is also infested with

huge potential. Due to the growing economies of the countries in this region and the growing importance of our neighbouring countries, the Indian Ocean Region has become importante in global politics. In such a scenario, the presence of India's stronger maritime forces instills security dilemma in Pakistan. Lastly, the threat of terrorism in Pakistan has a long history and it is still the most important challenge which the country is facing. Terrorism in Pakistan takes various forms like criminal, ethnic, religious extremism and sectarian. And this threat is aided by porous Afghan border. According to 'Annual Security Report 2023' by Center for Research and security studies, Pakistan has seen 56 percent in violence from 2022 to 2023. Therefore, although the country has always worked for these threats, all these military challenges are still posing threats to National Security.

Apart from this, a number of ecological challenges are also putting National Security in danger. Firstly, Pakistan is worst affected country due to climate change in the whole South Asia. According to 'Economic survey of Pakistan 2023-24', 2.3 billion trees were planted in the first phase of Green Pakistan Upscaling

program. But, still country we have not been able to reverse the path of natural degradation. Each year, the country loses billions of dollars in the infrastructure damages, life losses, and economic degradation, all due to floods, heatwaves, drought, etc. In the same way, natural disasters are quickly becoming the biggest threat to a State's national security. Pakistan has always been prone to natural calamities whether it be floods or earthquakes. In contemporary times, increased sealevel, melting of glaciers, drastic increase in temperatures, and frequent flood all are posing nonconventional security threats to the country.

Shrinking Economy is another challenge to the national security. Pakistan's declining GDP of 2.3, increase in trade defecit, shrinking economic capacity and poor economic policies all helps in putting national security in peril. In contemporary times, when economic power is a basic pillar of security, with such a negative outlook of security, Pakistan is struggling to strengthen its national security. As stagnant or weak economic growth directly affects the military spending. With limited financial resources Pakistan may struggle to modernized its

armed forces and maintain a credible defense posture. In the same way, Pakistan's energy crisis hampers industrial growth and creates widespread power shortages, which affect productivity and national output. In the long term, this weakens critical infra-structure which is essential for national defense and economic security. Additionally, economic challenges such as inflation and resource manage-ment have resulted in food insecurity. With millions facing hunger and malnutrition, societal stability is compromised, making the nation more vulnerable to internal strife and weakening its overall societal apparatus. Lastly, water shortages in Pakistan also represent a growing challenge that affects multiple dimensions of the country's national security. Pakistan's economy heavily relies on agriculture, which consumes over 90% of the country's water. Water shortages significantly reduce crop yields, leading to food insecurity. "Pakistan touched the water stress line in 1990 and crossed the water scarcity line in 2005. If the situation persists, Pakistan is likely to face an acute water shortage or a drought-like situation in the near future", 'The News' reported in 2018. So, all these interlinked challenges lead to weak economy which ultimately endangers

the country's security.

Lastly, Pakistan also faces certain techno-logical challenges which can cause serious threats to its national security, particularly in areas of cybersecurity and management of information. Pakistan's cyber landscape is increasingly targeted by both state and non-state actors. According to Kyspersky Managed Detection and Response Annual report, Cyber attack in Pakistan increased 300 times in the first quarter of 2024 as compared to 2023. Due to these attacks, sensitive information about national security, military operations, and personal data can be compromised leading to strategic disadvantages. Similarly, the spread of uncontrolled and disinformation through social media platforms can also lead to disruption of social cohesion. The social media platforms often lack effective mechanisms to curb the spread of false informations It can even amplify misinformation as algorithm can generate sensa-tionalist information and of multiple fake accounts can amplify the misinformation as well. This makes it difficult for agencies to stop the spread of false narratives which are often shaped by non-state actors.

Pakistan, in the words of Paul Kennedy is a country "whose collapse would spell transboundary mayhem; while its steady economic progress and stability, on the other hand: would bolster its region's economic vitality and political soundness." At the present time, country is facing a number of challenges from economic to technological, which apart from affecting the relevant department, endangering the national security as well. The condition of security is quiet worrisome, as according to Quaid-e-Azam " The weak and defenseless, in this imperfect world, invite aggression from others". There is a dire need to take steps to ensure combat these challenges.

Firstly, the Government must take steps to strengthen National Integration. Although Pakistan has a diverse community, which is divided along religious, class, and sectarian lines, still the sense of national integration can be generated through apropriate steps. Firstly, the government should strengthen the provincial structure by providing provinces greater autonomy, especially in resource distribution and governance, can help address feelings of marginalization. Promoting provincial

rights within the framework of the federation. would strengthen national unity and reduce regional tensions, especially in areas like Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Similarly, the state should also pose promote interfaith harmony, regulate religious seminars and encourage moderate religious discourse; as they are the keys to reduce sectarian tensions. Lastly, Education should not be ignored, rather it should be used carefully to promote national integration. The state should introduce such curriculum that fosters democracy in diversty, and helps in instilling a sense of unification among students. There should be inter-region student exchange programs. All these measures can help in building national integration which will ultimately strengthen the power of state.

Secondly, State should help work to address the climate related security risks, as climate change is the most important nonconventional security threat to the National security. Natural disasters like floods, droughts, wildfires, and heat waves are becoming more frequent day by day. So, the Government should work to strengthen the natural disaster preparedness through early warning systems, better forecasting technologies, and well-coordinated emergency response mechanism. Such

steps will help reduce loss of life and damage to critical infrastructure. Similarly, weak environmental governance contributes to poor resource management and increase vulnerability to climate change. So, the institutions like Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) should be strengthen so that it helps in protecting the natural resources and improving enforcement of environmental regulations. Additionally, climate change is a global issues and is not linked to Pakistan only. So, Pakistan should strengthen its role in global climate agreements, such as the Paris Agreement, and should enhance cooperation with neighboring countries on transboundary climate risks. By participating in international climate forums, Pakistan can better raise voice among global community that how it is paying of something which it is not responsible for and and can gain access to resources to combat its climate related challenges.

Apart from these, reforming intelligence and defense strategy can also significantly improve Pakistan's national security. One of the key areas of reform is intelligence gathering and analysis. Pakistan's existing intelligence agencies such as Inter-Services Intelligence and Intelligence Bureau play a pivotal role in safeguarding the

nal   nation's security. To address the evolving nature of security threats, agencies must prioritize Technological advancements, cross agency collaboration, and community engagement. Similarly, insurgencies in regions like Balochistan, and the presence of militant groups such as Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan pose significant challenges. A key remedy lies in using intelligence driven counter insurgency measures that focus on identifying and disantling insurgent networks. Intelligence enables precision in military operations, limiting collateral damage, and maintaining public support. For instance, the 2014 Zarb-e-Azb operation in North Wazirstan, which combined intelligence and military action which significantly weakened the terrorism. According to reports, this intelligence and military operation reduced terrorist activities in North Waziristan by 70 %. In the same way, intelligence driven operations can better access areas which are vulnerable to extremism and radicalization. So, efforts to counter Extremist ideologies, combined with localized intelligence can prevent terrorist recruitement.

Pakistan must also adopt to a strategy based on asymmetric warfare. Pakistan faces a variety of asymmetric threats, including insurgencies, terrorism, and hybrid warfare, rather

than large-scale military engagements. Pakistan's armed forces which are trained primarily for conventional battles, need to embrace strategies that deal with unconventional enemies using guerilla tactics, terrorism and cyber warfare. Strengthening technological advancement in defense allows Pakistan to strengthen its asymmetric warfare capabilities. Technology plays a vital role in counter terrorism, intelligence gathering, and cybersecurity, offering precise, and low cost solutions. For example, using drone technology can provide effective surveillance over insurgent areas and can be deployed for targeted strikes with minimal collateral damage. In the same way, AI-driven predictive analytics can identify patterns in insurgent movements and behaviors. Real time data collection through AI tools can also assist in preempting potential threats. One of the objective of Pakistan's National Security Policy 2022-26, is to strengthen defence and territorial integrity through "combating hybrid warfare through enhancing information, and cyber security while confronting disinformation, influence operations, and economic coercions, among other hybrid warfare tools". Therefore, the National security can be strengthened by acting on all these technological advancements.

Multilateral cooperation involving engagement with multiple countries and international organizations to address security concerns through dialogue, alliances, and collaborative efforts can also help in strengthening national security. Multilateral Defense alliances can bloster national defense capabilities through access to technological advancements, intelligence sharing networks, and joint military exercises. Pakistan's defense relationship with China is one of its most significant alliances. China provides Pakistan with advanced military technology, joint military exercises, and infrastructure support, particularly throy China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. In the same way, insurgencies and terrorism within Pakistan can be better managed through international collaboration on intelligence and counter-terrorism efforts. For example, Pakistan can engage in talks with Afghanistan Government to restrict their land used against Pakistan. Lastly, Pakistan should play a proactive role in global peace and security by contributing to international peacekeeping missions. Pakistan has consistently been one of the largest contributors of UN peacekeeping missions. According to ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Over 235,000, Pakistani UN peacekeepers have served with distinction in 48 UN peacekeeping missions, with Pakistan

consistently retaining the position of one of the top troop-contributing countries at the UN." Enhanced participation in these missions can strengthen Pakistan's global standing and can provide valuable experiences in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

In a nutshell, Pakistan is vulnerable to challenges more than it has ever been. The challenges to national security ranging from economic to climate, make it difficult for the government to strengthen the security. But, taking appropriate measure like strengthening defense strategy, reforming intelligence, addressing climate related issues etc. can help the country to protect itself from threats in a better way. R.D MacLaurin in his book "Managing National Security; The American Experience and Lessons for Third World" said "The social and economic vulnerabilities related to national security throughout the Third World, and in most case much more related to National security than in the developed countries. The threat lie in the heart of understanding and implement of the concept of security". Therefore, with a better understanding of all these factors which are putting security in peril, and taking req step, the state can better safeguard its boundaries and people.