

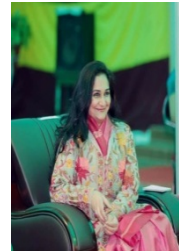


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National Security Policy of Pakistan 2022-2026: An Overview



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Introduction

On 14 January 2022 (Friday), the Prime Minister of Pakistan— Imran Khan released Pakistan's first ever public version of the National Security Policy (NSP),¹ a multi-pronged strategy for protection of its citizens' welfare on lines of the *Riasat-e-Medina* with an aim to guard their economic interests with a stronger defence capability. The NSP was unveiled at the 36th National Security Council meeting chaired by the Prime Minister and attended by Federal Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Defence, Information and Broadcasting, Interior, Finance, Human Rights, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, all Services Chiefs, National Security adviser and senior Civil and Military Officers. It was approved

Key Points

- NSP is an aspirational doctrine with almost 50 percent of the policy classified.
- Although purely factual, elementary and short on details, but credit worthy as it is Pakistan's first national security policy.
- It includes both traditional and non-traditional security issues, making it a Comprehensive National Security framework.
- Kashmir occupies a substantial part in the policy, but no statement in the document reflects reverting to pre-Article 370 days.
- Human security and economic security has been mentioned as core areas, including gender perspective.



by the federal cabinet on 28 December 2021.²

The Policy was finalised after seven years of careful and thorough examination and consultations by the National Security Division with an aim of framing a national security consensus that transcends political differences and is unaffected by changes in the national political space through political discourse.³

The policy will be analysed in four parts. **Part One** will discuss highlights of the Policy; **Part Two** covers Pakistan Media reports; **Part Three** dwells on the responses of the Indian Media and **Part Four**, deals with the Implications for India.

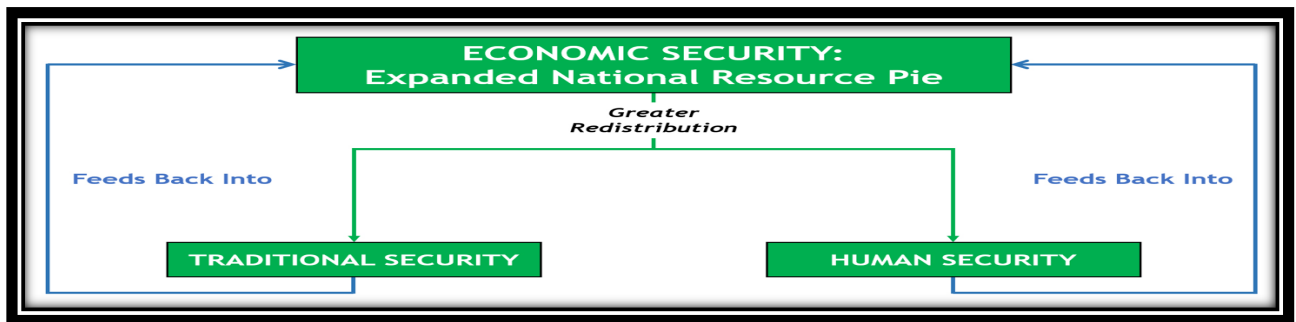
Part I: Highlights of the NSP

- Although, the complete doctrine is 113 pages long, however only 48 pages are available for public dissemination. It is envisioned for a period of five years, post which it would be reviewed under the joint coordination of the National Security Adviser and the National Security Committee.
- This public version of the NSP is intended to provide an insight into the country's overall national security vision, direction, and a framework for implementing national security interests.
- The document contains Eight Sections. *Section I* comprises the policy formulation process; *Section II* comprises conceptual elements of Pakistan's National Security framework. Six thematic sections follow, each of which provides an assessment of the context and Pakistan's desired goals & objectives in the particular area of national security; *Section III* on 'National Cohesion' examines preservation of ideology & culture, ensuring unity & stability, and making public service responsive to the needs of citizens; *IV*, focuses on economic security, and emerging technologies; *Section V* provides policy guidelines for ensuring defence, deterrence, and territorial integrity, and space & cyber security; *Section VI* focuses on 'Internal Security' and examines challenges of terrorism, violent sub-nationalisms, extremism & sectarianism, and organised crime; *Section VII* assesses the global realignments, Pakistan's key bilateral and multilateral relationships, and overall approach towards diplomacy. Finally, *Section VIII*, examines population & migration, health security, climate & water security, food security, and gender security.⁴
- The policy document places citizens security and dignity at the core and safeguarding Pakistan sovereignty by ensuring '*National cohesion and harmony*' by preservation of

territorial integrity, enhancing economic independence and ensuring the writ of the state.⁵ It espouses an “*inclusive national discourse*” based on “*preservation of its Islamic character*” and highlights the role of military in ensuring the unity and integrity of the county.

- The overall aim is to achieve a ‘*Comprehensive National Security*’ comprising of both traditional and non-traditional security threats under one doctrine. The ultimate goal is to ensure people's safety, security, dignity, and prosperity.

Figure 1: Symbiotic Relationship Between Traditional and Non-Traditional Security



Source: National Security Policy of Pakistan 2022-26 for Public Distribution

- The main bedrock of the Policy lies in its emphasis on ‘*economic security*’ and ‘*sovereignty*’ through sustainable growth, inclusive development, and financial solvency by addressing the issue of external imbalances, and vertical & horizontal inequalities. The China- Pakistan Economic Corridor and other connectivity initiatives are seen as an opportunity to expand export and industrial base while building rewarding economic relationships in the region. There is a need for development of a comprehensive maritime policy to optimise the blue economy of Pakistan.⁶
- Security of land, air, and sea borders along with space & cyber domains is important to ensure a requisite conventional military capability against a regressive and dangerous ‘ideological driven immediate neighbourhood’. Maritime security, strategic stability, space security, information & cyber security and hybrid warfare are also prioritised.
- Internal security issues, like sub-nationalist movements, sectarianism, extremism, narcotics, organised crimes, violent sub-nationalities and terrorism are considered as threats to Pakistan.
- Issues relating to foreign policy are enumerated with the aim of securing Pakistan’s interests and position in the comity of nations through political and economic

diplomacy.⁷ The document claims that, India's unilateral action of August 2019 (abrogation of Art 370 and 35A in Kashmir) have been 'rejected' by the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). In the external context, the immediate neighbourhood includes, Afghanistan, China, India and Iran. The rest of the world includes Middle East and West Asia, United States, UK, Europe, Central Asia and Russia. The document commits to the revival of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in an equitable manner as well as other multilateral forums like, OIC, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation etc. reiterating to remain as the leading voice of Islamophobia.

- Human Security is also discussed with acceptance of the fact that over half of its population is below the age of 30 years. Recognising this large youth demographic bulge is considered to be an opportunity and a challenge. It has put stress on public services, natural resources, and the economy and considered itself as the fastest urbanising country of South Asia.⁸ As 80 per cent of the Indus Water Basin originates outside Pakistan, access to transboundary watercourses is seen as a national security imperative.
- Gender Security, health security, climate and water stress are also covered in the document.

Part II: Response of the Pakistan Media

The Pakistani Media has responded positively towards the NSP but some sections of the media considers it as a Public Relation (PR) exercise; few articles though has an unbiased evaluation. The *Geo News* called it a 'historic moment'.⁹ The *Daily Times* Op-Ed piece praised the document as a 'great intellectual endeavour' of the government, but also pointed out at the absence of reference to national cohesion without any discussion on nationhood or national identity.¹⁰ Another article in *The Nation*, commented that the country was in dire need of a 'multi-pronged strategy' in the new and dynamic regional/global environment, and it must take pro-active steps to claim its space, hence the NSP is an important step in this direction.¹¹ DG ISPR highlighted the role of the armed forces by stating that the forces will play their due part in achieving the vision laid out in the policy,¹² and that it is an important milestone in strengthening Pakistan's National Security.

Another Op-Ed article titled, "Non-Starter of a Policy", mentions that "though it took seven years to write this document but it covers only the next four years not more". Furthermore, he wrote that it is rather bizarre that this 'citizen centric' document was not presented in



Parliament— a forum representing the people’s collective will. It was tabled and approved also without any discussion or debate in both the Houses of Parliament or any Committee. The document is also ‘silent’ on the state of basic rights and does not address the question many eminent educators are asking that is “how does the rollout of the single national curriculum with its emphasis on faith, and other such initiatives, prepare the youth for stepping into the 21st century global village?”.¹³

The opposition political parties opposed vehemently the manner in which the document was cleared ‘undemocratically’. The Pakistan Democratic Movement’s (PDM) chief- Maulana Fazlur Rehman, questioned as to how can one opinion on national security be enough, and also how can the policy be formulated without the parliament being aware? He lashed out at the government for “green lighting the security policy without any consultation”.¹⁴

The Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) too expressed concern over the Government’s act of “bypassing” the Parliament in the formulation of the National Security Policy (NSP). In a statement, the PPP Information Secretary and MNA– Shazia Marri regretted that neither the Opposition nor the Parliament knew about the points mentioned in the document. Ms Marri said that the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) Government had announced the NSP ‘without taking’ the Parliament into confidence which was tantamount to “disrespect of the parliament”. She said that the PPP had never politicised issues of national security, but unfortunately, the “selected government” has been politicising all important national issues like the country’s security policy.¹⁵

Led by the PPP’s Senator- Sherry Rehman, Opposition Lawmakers staged a walkout from the Upper House. In Rehman’s view, this made the newly passed policy merely a “piece of paper” which had nothing to do with ground realities. She also took a jive at the government’s bill to make the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) autonomous, which was a demand of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).¹⁶ Ayesha Siddiqa in her article stated that the NSP does not address the issue of civil-military balance which is central to managing the shift from geo-strategy to geo-economic.¹⁷

Part III: Reactions of the Indian Media

Eminent journalist, Shekhar Gupta calls “The new policy as mostly chaff; it is the most inward-looking policy in three decades arguing that though the mention of Kashmir merits only 113 words in the document made public, it is the smallest segment of the policy, looks like stepped back on Kashmir, but it is important to note its claim, that India’s move to bifurcate the J&K state into two Union Territories has been rejected by the region’s people”.

Further, analysing the doctrine, he contends that Pakistan has realised its loss of stature and friendship with the US, even as seven decades of relationship have gone by. The document consigns America as rest of the world, and mentions that it does not believe in “Camp Politics”. Other apprehensions discussed in the Indian Media was the language used in the document which mentioned more than once about how ‘Hindutva politics’ is being promoted by the current régime, which might lead to warfare either of conventional or no contact variety.¹⁸

The policy offers no clear roadmap of what Pakistan wishes to pursue to bring about peace with India. In fact, Pakistan’s continued duplicity is seen on issues of terrorism and its use of terrorist groups as proxies against India. Moreover, the NSP’s claim of “pursuing better relations with India” sounds hollow, as there is no change in Pakistan Army’s anti-India attitude. All this academic exercise is geared towards the international audiences as the policy’s rhetoric of human security and connectivity combined with peace with India, is to ‘give the impression’ that Pakistan is changing.¹⁹ Will this help Pakistan in convincing the international community especially the IMF and the FATF?

The NSP cannot change Pakistan’s direction, as without cooperative ties with India, they can neither have human security or a successful economy. It further reveals the sterility of Pakistani thinking on a comprehensive basis. The country will sadly remain in the iron grip of its completely flawed approach to India.²⁰

The *Delhi Policy Group* report mentions that while the NSP ticks all the right boxes in identifying Pakistan’s security challenges, it simplifies the solution to the extent that the document loses the semblance of seriousness. As from Pakistan’s perspective, engaging in ‘perpetual hostility and unwinnable competition’ with India has plunged the country into many national security problems that it is confronting today.²¹

Part IV: Implication for India

There is no evident change in viewpoints about Pakistan’s relations with India. The policy states that Pakistan wants to “improve relationship with India” but also adds that a “just and peaceful resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute remains at the core of the bilateral relationship”.

India is mentioned ‘14 times’ in the document and only once it talks positively wherein it mentions that, “Pakistan wishes to improve its relationship with India”.²² At the same time, it denounces India as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region the document

suggests that India's expansion of trade and investment in modern technologies is disruptive to the regional peace and prosperity.

India needs to be cautious of the fact that with respect to defence and territorial integrity, the report gives "special attention to manage lingering border disputes, particularly along the Line of Control and it accuses India on the ceasefire violations which are threatening civilian lives and property and endangering regional stability".²³

On internal security, extremism and sectarianism, there is no acknowledgement that it has grown through state patronage; "Religious extremists has been used by the army for electoral engineering and other purposes, including for terrorism as an instrument of state policy". The present document comes across as part academic and part bureaucratic exercise – almost like the output of a think tank. There does not seem to have been any political input into it, which is an obvious and major weakness.²⁴ The policy believes that the possibility of use of force by adversary cannot be ruled out. The expansion of India's nuclear triad disturbs the strategic balance in the region posing as security threats.²⁵

The public version of the policy does not demand the reversal of the decision to abrogate Articles 370 and 35A, instead, it demands "a just and peaceful resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute". It seems necessary for Pakistan to engage with India as its geo-economic transition cannot progress without a fundamental shift in its India policy. Hence, with the new NSP, India can focus on closer economic ties with Pakistan. But another cause of concern is Pakistan's support to terrorist infiltration in J&K which has seen a significant rise since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan from the US in August 2021. More weapons are being sent across the LoC and more civilians are being targeted in the valley. Pakistan has not shed terrorism as an instrument of state policy, instead it continues to support the Khalistan movement and has upped the ante to revive the movement in Punjab especially when elections are near.²⁶

Conclusion

The NSP, though appears extensive on paper, but in actuality is silent on how the Government of Pakistan and the federating units can take concrete measures to achieve those objectives on ground. Multiple times mention has been made in the document for the need to have a Comprehensive National Security Policy (CNSP) which makes the read repetitive. It is purely factual, elementary and short on details, but due credit should be given for the fact that Pakistan has finally come out with a National Security Policy period.



End Notes

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