



THE EVOLUTION OF PAKISTAN'S STRATEGIC CULTURE: A COMPARISON OF TRADITIONAL VS. NON-TRADITIONAL THREAT PERCEPTIONS

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Abstract

This research tries to demonstrate a causal link between how conventional security issues are intertwined with nontraditional security difficulties, preventing them from always qualifying for a high priority position in Pakistan's strategic decision-making. The research looks at how Pakistan is stuck in a "tunnel vision trap" where it is unable to prioritise non-traditional security problems above conventional national security difficulties due to a constant emphasis on traditional security issues. The research finds that despite the fact that it addresses strategic red lines responsibly and cautiously both inside and outside of its area, its high priority for conventional threat perceptions weighs down on its internal nontraditional security concern. The study comes to the conclusion that Pakistan's historic emphasis on security in making decisions does not change even while shifting from the pursuit of geoeconomic goals to the geostrategic prioritising of national interest. Due to this architecture's linked securitization, all transitional junctions to its strategic culture are useless or unimportant.

Keywords: Strategic Culture, Securitization Theory, Nontraditional Security Challenges.

Introduction

Pakistan is now dealing with a wide range of problems that result from decisions taken over the course of seven decades as it developed its strategic culture. These difficulties include turbulent internal and external threats, the long-standing threat of religious extremism, isolation on a regional and international scale, a deteriorating international reputation, tense relations with eastern and western neighbours, internal instability, institutional conflict, and economic upheaval. It is possible to



establish a causal relationship between these difficulties and Pakistan's approach to designing and implementing its national security architecture. Pakistan's strategic culture has been moulded by a dominant role in pursuing conventional security and danger perceptions, which resonate with a vigorous military-centric approach. According to Ahmar (2020), such a prioritising decision results in making and executing strategic decisions in a vacuum where other more important problems or concerns may be slightly deferred to low-priority national security plans. Due to the high reliance on geostrategic prioritising of national security, other more urgent concerns have been held at low levels, which has bred complicated obstacles in the realisation of national interests at both the national and international levels. (Meher, 2012). Due to erroneous perceptions, exaggerated conventional security threats, and broader nontraditional security threats to human and national security, identifying a transformation in strategic culture becomes more difficult.

Literature Review

The main issue in this respect is how conventional national security concerns tend to be eclipsed in Pakistan by the realist paradigm, which makes fulfilling national interests either expensive or meaningless over the long run. According to Tahsin (2014), national interest should guide strategic culture rather than ideology or feelings. It should be rooted in reality and cost-benefit analysis; for instance, when analysing the strategic environment, trade-off judgments must be objective. Pakistan's state obligations are hampered by the impression that the majority of its strategic choices are spinoffs or retaliations to an India-centric narrative. In the context of securitization theory, this indicates that Pakistan's strategic culture is often anchored by its long-standing, historical competition with India, which has reduced the importance of other goals. The way that strategic culture is described in Pakistan's construct is the basis for the widespread belief that Pakistan seeks a military-focused, India-centric design for its strategic culture. According to Colin S. Gray, it is impossible to create a strategic culture around rigid, unchanging, or abstract ideas of national security and interest. He contends that strategic culture is organic since it may switch between priorities and preferences put forward by governments while deciding on their course of action for policy. Additionally, he contends that incorrect cultural interpretation or sociopolitical indicator translation might distort views of a state's strategic culture and undermine whatever strategic equilibrium that has been established with rivals and competitors (Gray, 2009). The consensus among supporters of strategic culture is that it offers an alternative intellectual setting that is significant for current and future strategic issues. Strategic culture is described by Booth (1990) as "a nation's traditions, beliefs, attitudes, behavioural patterns, habits, symbols, accomplishments, and special methods of adjusting to the environment and addressing challenges involving the threat or use of force." Every state has a strategic culture that restricts the use of force as a reaction to threats. Political elite beliefs, norms, and values have the greatest impact on this culture. According to Das (2009), Pakistan's security managers shape the country's strategic trajectory by interpreting views of strategic vulnerabilities through the lens of its strategic culture, as well as material, domestic, and technical variables. This viewpoint has continued to serve as the key barometer both domestically and abroad, which has been a focal point for relations between Pakistan and other countries. Pakistan's strategic culture has often been misunderstood



because it attaches ideology-intensive, military-centric options to achieve national interest and construct national security goals. In his "punctuated equilibrium" model, Avant (2000) claims that "strategic culture is not immune to change" and "proves the point regarding changes in strategic culture" by showing how the emergence of a strategic cultural paradigm is followed by periodic paradigm shifts in strategic culture due to the cumulative effect of actors' adaptation to anomalous experiences, with culture remaining static over a relatively long intervening period."

It is generally accepted that cultural influences on Pakistan's leadership throughout the construction of national security impact the strategic calculus and strategic culture of that country. Fair (2016) has even made the case that Pakistan has seen a deterioration in the international system while India has gained momentum in the economic and technical spheres. She contends that according to the rules of game logic, Pakistan should make some kind of concessions to India since doing so now will be less expensive than waiting until later. According to Fair's view, Pakistan feels compelled to sustain an ongoing rivalry with India in order to achieve its national security goals, which is a key driver of its strategic culture. Her reasoning also suggests that Pakistan's strategic culture has been disrupted by a constant emphasis on antagonistic interaction with India, which has complicated its national security responsibilities. To follow up on this idea, Tehsin (2014) contends that a military war with India would be more costly for internal security than it would be advantageous strategically. In this respect, the focus is on how Pakistan's strategic culture, which is affected by anti-India rhetoric, interferes with or even completely undermines its economic interests and rational goals.

Design considerations for Pakistan's strategic culture in the twenty-first century: aperture decision-making

Understanding the boundaries beyond which a strategic culture begins straining, overreaching, or becoming fatigued is essential when developing a strategic culture for a state to convert into national security policy or when reviewing national interest prioritisation. Pakistan's current problems are related to the country's rising regional and international political trends as well as its 75-year-old strategic culture. Pakistan has to reconsider and reassess its strategic culture in light of this viewpoint. Without making any significant changes to its strategic culture, Pakistan previously depended on a short-term strategy of active engagement with players to address the current crisis, whether it was internal or foreign. National Security Policy (2022), which recently underwent a modification, showed that Pakistan was moving away from chronic anxieties and placing more focus on geo-economics and regional cooperation. These changes and other elements suggested a review paradigm in consideration of shifting trends in Pakistan's strategic culture. After Pakistan's nuclearization, it underwent substantial changes to its national security architecture and national interest determination. This review paradigm was then observed. The trajectory Pakistan is on to move from seeking geostrategic priority to a geoeconomic drive is similar to how Pakistan's strategic culture underwent a paradigm shift following nuclearization. As a result, Pakistan's strategic culture might be described as organic rather than static, as was often thought.



The alternative viewpoint of strategic culture is often used to explain strategic problems at the regional and global levels. The belief that "violence is what fixes the issue" is widely held in South Asia and is primarily a product of systematic cultural understanding (Gerharz et al., 2017). It is ingrained in Pakistani and Indian strategic traditions. This is a key factor in why regional security norms developed in violent environments rather than via negotiation and mutual accommodation between the two governments. Similar to this, according to Rizvi (2002), various social dispositions, policymakers' perspectives, and other elements including realism, professionalism, and organisational characteristics all influence Pakistan's strategic culture. In accordance with Rizvi, Brinsky (2022) thinks that the causational influences and consequences of "strategic shocks" are what shape Pakistan's strategic culture through time. The discovery of nuclear weapons was a significant shock that forced Pakistan to reconsider and redefine its strategic culture in light of the new security framework in the area. Security administrators in both nations have been adapting to significant developments since the turn of the twenty-first century. Both nations believed that they would desist from escalation dominance or not ascend the escalation ladder in the absence of nuclear learning.

This perception made the Kargil War seem like a "huge shock" that may spiral out of control. Following that, a consensus emerged within the strategic community that both states' strategic culture orientations had changed as a result of acquiring nuclear weapons, and that they now believed that bringing the cost of war to an intolerable level would help them balance one another's military ambitions. The strategic cultures of both states may have seen fresh changes in how they viewed conventional adventurism in a deterrent environment and how their nuclear doctrines framed future confrontations, according to further causal developments between the two nations. Questioning the idea that "nuclear weapon states do not fight wars" resulted in a paradigm shift toward strategic culture and a redefinition of the function of military adventurism. Both nations used Kargil as a test case to determine how to replicate their own strategic cultures.

The Twin Peaks Crisis and potential military standoffs forced both nations to take more risky stances against one another due to the geopolitical and cultural importance of South Asia. There remained leeway for conventional adventurism within their Credible Minimum Deterrence system, with Pakistan seeking deterrence-by-denial and India pursuing deterrence-by-punishment. Pakistan realised it had to push the boundaries of its denial as Indian military forces carried out Operation Parakram under the aegis of its Sunderji Doctrine. These changes were the consequence of a number of causes, and Pakistan's security establishment realised that India believed there was room for a conventional conflict with Pakistan on a strategic level. According to Staniland (2020), India has shown a willingness to take on more risks since 2001–2002 when employing force to further its national security goals. India's strategic behaviour changed as a result of variables related to its economic and technical development. Hall (2014) supports Hermann Kahn's claim that the asymmetrical expansion of India's economy and military in comparison to Pakistan has complicated the security situation in South Asia and increased the possibility of an unanticipated crisis.

India's strategic behaviour gradually changed over South Asia's second nuclear decade as a result of



the region's shifting security environment and strategic environment. Following suspected terrorist strikes from Pakistan, the Bharati Janata Party (BJP) government decided to pursue a strategy of active engagement with that country. The move was principally caused by newly discovered strategic gaps brought about by India's technical ascendancy, which was supported by an economic safety net to cover the costs of any unforeseen events below the nuclear threshold. Lalwani and Haegeland (2018) point out that the surgical strike narrative crafted by India significantly weakened the already precarious security situation in South Asia, which had an effect on their strategic culture. A progressive change in India's crisis behaviour throughout South Asia's second nuclear decade was indicative of how these advances altered the security environment in the region. A paradigm shift toward strategic culture like this demonstrates how margins may be abused to serve short-term purposes and undermine long-term strategic goals. By transferring already limited economic resources, Pakistan attempted to counterbalance India's adventurism at a greater cost, but this had an adverse effect on other security areas. This strategy of simply looking in one direction led to strategic overstretching since it compromised the goals of comprehensive security in exchange for minuscule strategic gains against India. According to Barthwal (2022), Pakistan continues to run on certain dogmatically woven strategic views by the military elite in a vacuum, without giving other security sectors the proper respect. According to Ahmer (2020), there has been no advancement in strategic culture that addresses non-conventional security challenges. Pakistan must take a practical stance toward the decision-making process in the context of the international security architecture of the twenty-first century.

Conceptual Framework

A tunnel vision trap, as defined by the European Center for Populism Studies, is a loss of perspective brought on by a keen attention on one thing that causes disregard of one's surrounds. Sull (2004) argues that the tunnel vision trap has certain hazards since it prevents policymakers from foreseeing the strategy's rising cost; it might also lead security managers to gamble excessively and prematurely on it and lull them into a false feeling of security. Due to its excessive attention on the "Indian menace" and the institutionalisation of its response, which is now taken for granted, Pakistan was unable to reorient itself in the face of new security threats. As a result, alternative objectives were seldom addressed. Security managers' concentrated vision deters them from seeing a developing issue with the security architecture. It leads to a loss of peripheral vision, which limits awareness and produces an erroneous impression of the security environment in the absence of early warning signs.

States risk incurring more expenses than anticipated benefits if strategic culture is not firmly rooted in reality and cost-benefit analysis. The strategic behaviour of India and Pakistan after developing nuclear weapons shows that both governments used a variety of tactics without taking into account the massive cost of seemingly little strategic gains. Khan (2005) asserts that Pakistanis are extraordinarily proud of their history, culture, and customs in the context of Pakistan. They are always keen to compete with India and take on tasks of far greater scope that can be addressed impartially. This strategy has an impact on Pakistan's strategic culture since the Manichean vision of India left it



with imperfections unique to itself. Because traditional security has interfered with nontraditional security issues, Pakistan has to pay more in terms of economic, diplomatic, and social costs for its propensity to balance India by any means, and security managers believe there is no other option as a result of this fixated vision regarding threat perception toward India. In 75 years of history characterised by mutual hostility, these strategic orientations toward India based on the psychological intolerance of India's superiority and political supremacy remained constant. Pakistan acknowledges dominance but not hegemony, and the strategic culture's "never say die" mentality accepts strategic failure, but submission is still not an option. (Khan, 2005)

However, Pakistan is captive to obsessions with reaching parity with its mightier neighbour at any costs and became trapped in the "Tunnel Vision Trap" as a result of its "never say die mentality." The securitization of old threat perceptions and the framing of India as an existential danger in Pakistan's strategic culture, which was the appropriate thing to do but not at the expense of neglecting other security referents, are the main causes of this tunnel vision trap. Securitization theory is described by Buzan (1998) as a socially created and intersubjective process through which a danger to a particular referent object is recognised and the item is judged deserving of protection. According to securitization theory, security is discursively created (Furlong, 2006). Emmers (2006) asserts that the state and its ruling elites, who may benefit from the process to further their own narrow goals, are the dominant forces in securitization. The securitizing actor must convince the audience, the general populace, decision-makers in government and the military, as well as other elites, that the referent object is in existential danger. The securitization idea may be simply described as "identifying a single security referent and prioritising it above all others at any costs" given the large literature on the subject. According to this point of view, the framing of "traditional threat perception" through securitization has connected it with Pakistan's national survival and led to the suppression and overlooking of "nontraditional security threats," which also proves the paper's main claim that a high priority placed on traditional threat perceptions weighs down on Pakistan's internal nontraditional security concerns and sets off the tunnel vision trap.

This "placing all of your eggs in one basket" mentality led to a dysfunctional strategy that broadened Pakistan's range of security-related challenges. It has been noted that Pakistan's strategic culture has supported this strategy, as seen by prior strategic behaviour. Security managers' strategic behaviour shows that they think and act in a linear manner. They often enter "crisis mode" by concentrating just on conventional security, which is damaging to all other 21st-century national security concerns. Future studies should explore the relationship between strategic mindsets, doctrinal rethinking, and conflict resolution and the consequences of the tunnel vision trap in this setting. Pakistan's strategic culture has always resisted attempts to change this strategy and prevented threat reduction without a variety of resources. However, there is no disputing the fact that Pakistan's concentrated geopolitical tendencies cost more money than they were worth. As he writes, "India and Pakistan are both hostages to stubborn fixations- one of a rising power seeking its place in the sun, and the other of a nation seeking parity with its mightier neighbour," Khan (2022) correctly argues that both India and Pakistan are hanged on to their maximalist positions in this context.



The Tunnel Vision Trap's Appraisal Cost

According to KE Boulding, security managers often form security disposition via "their image of the role," but this does not exclude the fact that decision-making is also influenced by orientations based on reality and cost-benefit analyses, as noted by Rizvi (2002). But because to the regional power imbalance and Pakistan's limited resource base, strategic culture and reality have forced Pakistan's security managers to adopt comparable policy actions. As a result of Pakistan's excessive fixation on security, politicians often make mistakes as a result of tunnel vision. According to Fair (2016), Pakistan has paid a price for its strategic desire to balance India and deny India any strategic space in the form of significant losses and damage to its prestige. There are certain target areas to estimate the appraisal cost of the tunnel vision trap, thus it may not be able to do a statistical study of the cost by formulating an equation.

Given its weak economic strength and the massive economic cost of its conflicts, Pakistan is intolerable. According to the 2004 study "Cost of Conflict Between India and Pakistan," Pakistan spent 1.2 billion USD (1.79 expenditures per GDP) during the military stalemate with India from 2001 to 2002. The graphic below makes many references to the amount of money India and Pakistan lost each day during the crisis.

Second, Pakistan suffered the price for diplomatic isolation when, after the 2008 Mumbai attacks, India found sympathy, if not outright sympathy, in many capitals across the world and the world accepted its propaganda that Pakistan was funding terrorism. Due to the economic effects and diplomatic isolation, this turned out to be a significant blow to Pakistan's national interests. India was the driving force behind Pakistan's downgrade by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), which had an impact on the country's credit rating, stock market, banking industry, and currency outflows.

Thirdly, Pakistan paid the price for a damaged reputation as India succeeded in portraying Pakistan as a state that sponsors terrorism by subtly equating Pakistan's support for Kashmiri independence with terrorism. This was made simpler for India by several developments along Pakistan's western border, notably after the death of Osama bin Ladin in Abbottabad.

Pakistan too paid a price for the deterioration of human values and the fraying of the social fabric. Extremism in religion, violence in society, and poor social capital production. These are a few problems that Pakistan's too ambitious strategic behavior—which continues to place a low priority on unconventional security issues—has given rise to.

Pakistan's strategic behaviour has resulted in more costs than benefits. According to the logical supposition, Pakistan should reconsider its strategic orientations since the country's basic interests are being compromised by the compartmentalised approach to conventional security. It is a well-known truth that hostile nations and those lacking in confidence-boosting measures cause their citizens to develop tunnel vision toward one another, however this is not always the case. This may be a trap for one party or both. The nations' strategic thinking is asymmetrically hampered by these tunnel vision



traps. Pakistan's policymakers now only have two choices: either accept India as the dominant power, which would cost less if done quickly, or reorder the importance of conventional security issues over nontraditional ones. According to Pakistan's newly issued National Security Policy for 2022, the country has chosen the second course of action because to the high price it must pay for its seven decades of fixation on India, even after it acquired nuclear weapons.

Pakistan's New Security Approach

There was a growing recognition among security managers that Pakistan's national security strategy needed to be changed due to the fixation on securitizing traditional threats coming from India in the face of shifting geopolitical, geoeconomic, and geostrategic circumstances. Pakistan's newly released national security strategy, which paradigmatically shifts from geopolitics to geo-economics, reflects these evolving trends. The policymaker's recognition of the unaffordable expense of the approach focusing only on conventional concerns led to this dispositional adjustment. Second, the security managers did not want to chase a false feeling of security by committing too much and too early to one strategic approach. The 2000-year-old Silk Route travelled through Pakistan, and this newly developed strategic culture of Pakistan is inspired by the internationalist worldview based on a knowledge of geopolitical reality and emphasises regional connection, political harmony, and economic interdependence. Tezin (2014)

Similarly, Pakistan's policy of wanting a peaceful neighbourhood based on interdependence, regional connectivity, and shared prosperity is reflected in its National Security Policy (2022). Pakistan that is safe and economically strong, benefiting from population and cultural variety. It prioritises national interests above sentimental policy-making after proper reflection and practicality. According to Salman (2022), Pakistan's move from geopolitics to geoeconomics and increased focus on regional cooperation indicate that Pakistan is giving up on the state of constant instability.

Due mostly to the state's economic requirements, which are now regarded essential for the survival of the state, Pakistan has shifted towards geoeconomic concerns and taken a careful approach to geopolitical ones. Due to Pakistan's involvement in the Afghan conflict during the last 20 years, there has been a surge of terrorism that has both internal and foreign connections. Due to threats from both its eastern and western frontiers, Pakistan lost its strategic openings, leaving it with few viable options. Pakistan would have entered a dead end if the old security strategy, which is centred on India. The MOFA (2021) statement highlights Pakistan's concerns to the international community regarding the politicisation of FATF and undermining of its processes by India. In the meantime, India explored unconventional options and used its diplomatic strength to project Pakistan as a country that sponsors terrorism in order to push Pakistan into the FATF's grey list with serious economic implications.

In addition to these, there are many more factors that influence Pakistan's interest in geo-economics, but its primary motivation is to benefit economically while tackling geopolitical issues. Pakistan must negotiate the terrain for its national interests at a time when the Taliban are back in Afghanistan given



the current difficulties. With the BJP in power and the US-China rivalry becoming more intense, India's worldview is shifting. Geoeconomics, however, is a low-hanging fruit, and Pakistan must make significant efforts to take advantage of the special geoeconomic potential presented by its topography. These forces predict/map a South Asian future in which Pakistan will continue to be embroiled in geopolitics and have a difficult time achieving its geoeconomic objective.

Future of Strategic Stability in South Asia

Without a doubt, South Asia is a significant area since both Pakistan and India lack overall stability as a result of animosity stemming from the subcontinent's separation and subsequent territorial strife. As predicted strategic stability was never created between the two archrivals—strands of stability necessary to understand the strategic drifts of both states—the deployment of a nuclear weapon in the area added a perilous dimension. The conclusion of the strategic culture conceptual framework, which examines strategic directions and drifts by taking rationality and ideational factors into account, is that Pakistan retains its traditional priority for security in decision-making even after shifting from the pursuit of geoeconomic goals to the geostrategic prioritisation of national interest. Due to this architecture's linked securitization, all transitional junctions to its strategic culture are useless or unimportant. The aforementioned claim about strategic restrictions is supported by the following reasons.

Because security measures were developed in violent environments rather than via negotiation and mutual agreement between the two governments, South Asia's security dilemma is insurmountable. Owing to resource limitations, Pakistan's securitization of other referents is a secondary concern due to the effect of cultural orientations rather than logical decision thinking. The "old nuclear wisdom" based on deterrence theories required to be updated in South Asia's changing security environment by a comprehensive, comprehensive, and long-term culturally oriented strategy. To develop any predicative, prescriptive, or normative arguments about the strategic architecture of South Asia, it is essential to comprehend the changes via focal points of the strategic cultures of Pakistan. The process of assessing intentions and actions in the haze of war, crisis, or conflict is prone to mistakes in South Asia's strategic context. There are few answers in nuclear deterrence theories for how governments' grand plans, increasing inequalities, and strategic diversions affect South Asia's strategic calculations in the context of possible nuclear flashpoints. Due to macroenvironmental, sociological, and microenvironmental developments in a strategic culture centred on hyperbole and belligerent behaviour, the security scenario in South Asia has become even more complicated.

Geoeconomics seems to be a systematic need when taking into account Pakistan's economic future since it also gives Pakistan a fresh image to combat its failing reputation on the international stage. However, Pakistan has a challenge in maximising its economic prosperity by using its geographic location. Geo-economics, which may lead to regional peace, economic success, and an environment where everyone benefits, is undermined by regional and international strategic rivalry. The strategic cultural orientations will also keep geo-economics trapped in earlier security conundrums. To take a



collaborative step towards geo-economics as a region, India and Pakistan need to bilaterally address the issues raised before. Both states are unable to behave with one another in a de-hyphenation mode after 75 years of strong entanglement.

Conclusion

Given its set disposition predicated on balancing India at any costs and by all means necessary, Pakistan did strategically overextend itself after gaining its independence. It took Pakistani politicians seven decades to remove their blinders and pay attention to non-traditional security challenges from all angles. Pakistan was driven into strategic detours or drifts that endanger its basic interests by current security problems and the tunnel vision trap. The already bleak economic picture was further compounded by Pakistan's participation in the war on terrorism as a strategic ally of the United States in Afghanistan. The security administrators in Pakistan were more aware of the massive price paid in exchange for little favours. This development makes it necessary for Pakistan to create a comprehensive security framework in order to navigate strategic areas and avoid the tunnel vision trap in the face of the security problems of the twenty-first century. The first step in the proper path is the prioritising of geo-economics within the context of national security strategy.

According to this viewpoint, Pakistan must look for new strategic spaces where it could pursue a policy of balancing and countering India without increasing the cost of strategy with respect to India. Strategic cultural restraints must be addressed, and a decision must be based on cost and benefit analyses rather than emotive policy-making as in the past. However, Pakistan must not ignore the Kashmir problem in an effort to avoid falling into a tunnel vision trap. Instead, it must look into other ways to persuade India to engage in talks, since doing nothing about Kashmir would be the same as losing.



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