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Pakistan's Security Challenges and Problems in the Next Decade

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SALMA MALIK, FEB 4 2016

Pakistan's geo-strategic location at the cross-roads of South, Central and West Asia has not only bestowed upon it many advantages, it has also encumbered it with serious security challenges. Pakistan's inability, for a plethora of structural and socio-political reasons, to build, nurture and sustain effective state institutions has meant that it has remained mired in internal as well as external security crises. The past decade and a half has been extraordinarily turbulent for Pakistan and it has borne the major brunt of the spill-over effects of the American led war on terror in Afghanistan resulting in huge costs to its economy and loss of over 40,000 lives.

While an important transition is taking place in Afghanistan with the withdrawal of the bulk of NATO and US forces, we are also witnessing a great upheaval in the Middle East and a deterioration in India-Pakistan relations. All these developments are likely to make an impact on Pakistan's security environment. Despite being caught in the proverbial line of fire for several decades past, Pakistan has usually been perceived by the international security and policy pundits as more part of the problem than a stakeholder in peace and resolution. Despite a plethora of writings on Pakistan's security problems, there remains a lack of indigenous discourse on the key elements of its national security. Most of the time, the country's complex dynamics have been examined by Western or regional analysts who lack nuanced understanding of the country.

Pakistan's Security Problems and Challenges in the Next Decade is a new book that has attempted to bring together opinions and voices from a cross section of Pakistani contributors. Including academics, analysts and policy-makers, who have contributed papers on areas regarding national identity and its relation with state security, strategic culture, appraisal of contemporary geostrategic aspects to examine their impact on Pakistan's security. The book thus focuses on the current as well as the future security predicaments of Pakistan, in the context of the intricate relationship between security and national identity as well as elements of national power. The focus of this volume is primarily on state-centric security seen through a comprehensive prism, linking issues of Pakistani state identity, governance, civil-military relations and policy making as its key components.

The study has two focal areas; firstly analysis of current challenges and issues affecting Pakistan's security, policy making and responses. Secondly, a futuristic perspective on the national potential to meet these challenges, interspersed with some policy guidelines that can help in actualizing this potential. In order to avoid generalization and make the study more perceptible, a timeline of 2025 has been set as a future goal-post. The timeline suits intelligent and real time scenario-building, using the reports by various key development agencies, both within and outside the country.

The book comprises of a total of ten chapters, spanning from a review of geostrategic developments and resulting threat scenario, the internal security parameters, an academic as well as practitioner's take on the strategic culture and its impact on policy outlook, to the demands of external security dynamics. It examines a range of questions, such as: What are the factors shaping the civil military interface? Are most of the problems affecting the state only externally driven? Is Pakistan insulated from the external stimuli and none of the regional or global developments, despite an interconnected world seem to cast an impact? What was Pakistan's national identity, did we as a nation ever aspire to build one?

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Written by Salma Malik

Co-relation between national identity and state security has not received much scholarly attention. Partly because the issue of state identity has been long settled in many countries of the world. However, amongst some states, including Pakistan, it remains debatable. There is hence a need to analyze whether a co-relation between the concepts of state security and state identity exists. This naturally leads to examine the ways and means in which lack of clarity about national identity may have impacted Pakistan's national security. At the outset this book aims to identify this co-relation and hopes to draw scholarly attention for more deliberations on this subject, with respect to Pakistan. The issue of national power potential is particularly relevant to Pakistan's future security prospects, both in traditional and nontraditional contexts. The country has faced external security problems from the day of its independence in August, 1947. But its problems have compounded due to events in neighbouring Afghanistan since the 1980s affecting Pakistan's internal security.

Great threat to individual as well as state institutions in recent years has emanated domestically. The seriousness of this threat has changed the Pakistan Army's doctrinal thinking, which has identified internal turmoil as the biggest challenge to Pakistan's security. The unfolding of the *National Action Plan* in the aftermath of the tragic school massacre in Peshawar and the emergence of terrorist outfits fortifies the need to reevaluate national security doctrine and also reflect as to what direction needs to be undertaken collectively as a nation.

An analysis of the impact on policy making by external and internal security challenges and the possible linkage of these two dimensions on the over-all securitization debate has been studied by scholars. However, fewer have dealt in detail with these linkages in particular reference to Pakistan. For example, Pakistan's policy makers, though initially hesitant and reluctant about seeking nuclear proliferation in decades past have systematically built a credible system of command and control to complement the infrastructure developed by the country. From a minimum credible deterrence posture to what is now termed as full spectrum deterrence policy, a chapter on strategic culture seeks to examine the centrality and role of the strategic weapons in the overall security calculus.

Last but not the least the paramount concerns of economic security, which like other pillars of holistic security carry a deep impact on the current situation and future outlook of the state. Like other interlinked concepts of security. On one hand, sound and stable economic indicators go a long way in ensuring sustained development and progress for the state, but on the other is this stark reality that, none of these ideals can be met, without a prudent security policy, and adequate steps for sustainability. Domestic, political and physical insecurity directly impacts on the flight of critical capital, industrial growth and investors' confidence. Coupled with growing concerns of energy insufficiency, a country like Pakistan which has an agrarian economy, narrow revenue and tax base, but an ever increasing population, will have more challenges than solutions in the coming decades.

About the author:

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