



Comprehensive National Defense: Applications for National Defense of Pakistan

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Abstract: *Pakistan is a state besieged by many internal and external threats. This paper analyses the relationship between wide-ranging social, structural and economic threats as well as institutional and structural issues that exist within the country's institutional frameworks and seeks to propose adoption a 'Comprehensive National Defense' approach which seeks to integrate the entire military and civilian capacity of a nation in an effort to create an invincible defense. Application of this would require a radical shift from traditional bureaucratic and military structures inherited from the colonial era in an effort to create a more inclusive military and civilian infrastructure capable of thwarting physical and non-physical threats including informational psychological threats. A key aspect of Comprehensive National Defense is enhanced deterrence capability by building infrastructures and institutions as well as training of the general population to ensure the survivability of the state in the eventuality of a full scale or nuclear confrontation.*

Key Words: Comprehensive National Defense, Pakistan, Threats

Introduction

Modern wars are not fought merely on a nation's border but major population centers and industrial as well as commercial centers are likely targets of the enemy's attack. A well-trained, educated and well prepared populace can prove to be a handy asset for its government and military in such scenarios. A trained population is better organized, can rely upon indigenous resources for survival, and aid its armed forces at various levels. However, an untrained and disorganized mass of people would be nothing but a bigger threat for the incumbent government than the enemy itself. Such a population would invariably create further chaos and disrupt critical operations while being susceptible to changing sides or

even aiding the enemy for its own survival. (Philipp Lange, 2018)

In today's chaotic world, possessing nuclear capability is a crucial deterrent for any nation's survival. Quiet surprisingly, nuclear weapons are now becoming more of war weapons than being merely deterrent instruments, especially in third world countries like Pakistan and India. (Montgomery, 2022) Traditional concepts of deterrence may not apply between the two adversaries owing to the very short warning time a plethora of potential triggers for armed conflict. The situation is made worse by the imbalance between India and Pakistan in terms of conventional weapons parity. Therefore, a national defense approach is necessary for a successful defense in case of a

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total war or nuclear escalation. (Montgomery, 2022)

Pakistan also faces a variety of domestic, regional and international threats that make having an organized and trained population a compulsion for the long term survivability of the state. Developing an adequate civil defense infrastructure and organized capability is essential for national survival in the long-term. Civil Defense is an effort to protect the citizens of a state (generally non-combatants) from a military attack. It uses the principles of emergency operations, prevention, mitigation, preparation, response or emergency evacuation and recovery. This concept became widespread in the US, Europe and the Soviet Union during the Cold War after the threat of nuclear weapons was realized. Modern connotations of the term include crisis management, emergency management, emergency preparedness, contingency planning, emergency services and civil protection. (Gruber, 2017)

There are many lessons for Pakistan to learn from the Swiss national defense approach that can be seen as part of "Total defense" e.g. Swedish word "Totalforsvar" refers to the commitment of a wide range of resources of a nation to its defense which includes civil protection. Military organized civil defense units can also be utilized as a part of national defense forces or paramilitary. Pakistan faces a consistent and direct threat from its neighbor India. Therefore, there is an imminent threat of a nuclear escalation that might occur in case of any misadventure under-taken by either of the two sides of border. The world has already witnessed this threat during 1999 in the limited Kargil war and 2001-2002 military standoffs between the two nuclear neighbors where any miscalculation could have started a full scale nuclear war. In recent developments of the Indian takeover of occupied Jammu and Kashmir, the threat still remains. However, the question arises, is Pakistan ready and whether the current nuclear deterrence is sufficient enough to avoid a full scale nuclear war?

Comprehensive National Security

The concept of Comprehensive National defense has itself evolved from the 'total defense approach' utilized by the Finnish and Swiss forces prior and during the Second

World War. The conception of A prepared nation standing behind its army can become its greatest strength in times of war. Even in conventional wars this has long been an established principle. This principle was amply demonstrated by the Finnish war of 1939 when Finland defended itself against a far superior Soviet Union.

Some key lessons can be drawn from this extraordinary conflict. Firstly, the Finnish managed to create national unity and cohesiveness through their cultural and institutional structures against the invading army. Secondly, the Finnish transformed the spirit of nationalism into practical capability through compulsory military service and the development of strategies that relied heavily on self-reliance and local resources. The Finnish focused on creating a culture of Resilience, grit and perseverance called "Sisu", as an essential for national defense. (Langdon-Davies, 1940)

Despite overwhelming military superiority in terms of numbers and equipment, 110 days of war left nearly a million Soviets dead and Fins successfully defended their independence. This was accomplished by preparing for the conflict months in advance while applying the above mentioned principles before and during the war. (Langdon-Davies, 1940)

A similar approach to the Finnish strategy can be found in Swiss approach to national defense. The Swiss approach to defense relies upon preparing a significant number of their population to assist directly in the war effort. The Swiss national defense strategy also referred to as Swiss National Redoubt focuses on not only deterring any possible invasion by making an attack extremely costly for the attacker thus

taking away any possible advantage of such an invasion but also protect their population and thus protect their way of life. (Coddington Jr., 1962)

The Swiss were therefore able to maintain their stance of "aggressive neutrality" during both the First and the Second World War despite being surrounded by powerful and usually hostile neighbors like Germany and France. Hence, while the entire Europe burned, the Swiss were able to continue their lives, not due to participating in war but because their preparations deterred any attack worthwhile for the attacker. The Swiss did not remain

passive after the advent of nuclear age. During the cold war, the Swiss built bunkers and facilities for their entire population and government. Today the Swiss have 130 percent coverage for their entire population. (Schmitt, 2022)

Therefore, a possible solution to Indian superiority in numbers and conventional weapons can be achieved by considering unconventional options as exemplified by the “Swiss national defense strategy” which is well-suited due to the possibility of nuclear escalation. Thus, the ability to reduce damage to the nation an assured survivability of the state would act as an added deterrent to any possible misadventure by India.

The security environment in Europe had developed into a prolonged contest of nerves between two Superpowers that were evenly matched militarily and in term of nuclear parity, thus making the prospects of an all-out war unthinkable. However, the rapidly changing nature of threats during the same era made the security environment much more complex and nuanced. The wars of the modern world were no longer confined to the battlefield; instead, the entire socio-economic, moral, political, and institutional structures of a nation were effectively part of the ongoing war.

The greatest challenge posed by such a war is that the conflict itself and its effects are nearly imperceptible to the general masses and therefore carry with it a significant psychological element. This psychological element necessitates building a robust social and moral culture within a society that can withstand difficulties without succumbing to defeatism or mass subversion.

The end of the Cold War heralded into a new era and a focus on increasing non-traditional security threats globally. While the

necessity of territorial security remains paramount, it has become increasingly evident that in modern wars nations, armed forces alone can no longer be not a guarantors of security nor can be sufficient to face long drawn wars. These were the factors that eventually led to the development of a holistic approach to securitization and defense in European theaters.

Sweden championed the early form of this approach by incorporating four defense branches during the Cold War. These branches were the military, economic, psychological and civil defense branch. Reviews and studies by the Swedish defense branches revealed that the last two branches i.e. the Psychological defense and Civil defense branches played the most pivotal role during peacetime by maintaining war preparedness levels and ensuring national cohesion as well as sense of purpose. Sweden maintained a significant civil defense forces under various government and volunteer organizations and associations that could mobilize more than a million Swedish citizens in the event of a war.

This approach is the Comprehensive National defense which focuses on four general dimensions i.e. military, civilian, informational and psychological. (Ieva Berzina, 2020) In this manner the concept of Comprehensive National Defense can be regarded as the modernized and broader application of the total defense approach adopted by the Nordic and Swiss countries. This approach considers and utilizes its trained and organized populace as its greatest asset. The primary objective for defense in this approach also changes from mere territorial defense to the protection of the nation as a whole.

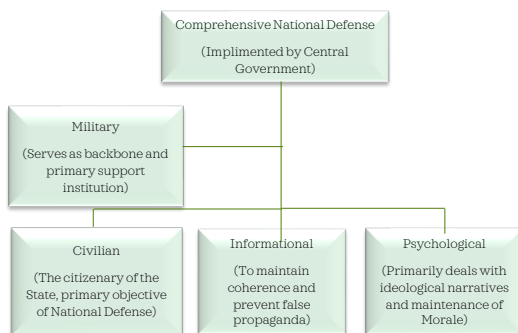


Figure 1: Organization of Comprehensive National defense. Adopted from (Ieva Berzina,2020)

Security challenges for Pakistan

Pakistan faces a number of National security challenges at domestic, regional, and international levels. For the last two decades, Pakistan has fought a costly war on terror. This war has been costly for the country in terms of loss in life and economic losses. During these trying times, Pakistan's security forces have displayed extraordinary discipline and professionalism while the nation as a whole has displayed perseverance and resilience. However, during this conflict one thing that has become painfully clear many times over is the lack of discipline and capacity of the Pakistani public.

The scale and scope of threats that are being faced by the nation has been consistently increasing. The proliferation of Non-traditional security threats after the 9/11 attacks and subsequent increase in instability of the Middle-East and Afghanistan due to failed 'nation building' efforts of the US have added to the already existing security problems in these regions. Pakistan has been directly affected by this subsequent instability in the form of terrorism and economic losses.

Adding to this instability is the great power competition in Eurasia due to rising powers such as Russia, China, and India. Each of these powers seeks to carve out its own sphere of influence and this in turn has led to an arms race throughout the region. India especially has adopted a progressively hostile posture towards Pakistan and is ramping up its military force structure on its borders. (Babar, [2022](#))

Social Challenges

In terms of the social sphere, Pakistan as a nation lacks a comprehensive set of cultural aspects other than religion that can form absolute symbols of identity for a common citizen, which can be considered as a binding force to all citizens. At the individual level therefore, the loyalty of a citizen is divided at various level of intensity between ethnic, sectarian, caste and political affiliations. This problem is further aggravated by several major political parties using provincial and ethnic divisions to secure their power bases in the home provinces of their central leadership.

The Pakistani nation also shows deficiencies in term of a culture of self-

discipline and civic responsibility. This can prove to be a serious issue in the event of a major national crisis. There is an absence of capacity for localized responses to threats and crisis.

Education Challenges

Pakistan has been unable to build a sound education system and this remains one of the greatest failures of successive governments. Unfortunately, the country has been unable to either evolve or adopt more successful and practice models for education. Due to this failure, the country's education system is divided along by class, language and religious line. None of which are able to inculcate any real skills to the students. As a result, students focus on rote learning and cramming to get high marks without conceptual clarity.

In reality, a student with higher secondary education has gained no real-life skills other than intermediate-level language skills and basic mathematical concepts. An intermediate student does not know his/her constitutional rights or responsibilities, tax filing, first aid, emergency response or any skill for that matter which can help them earn a respectable living if they choose not to pursue higher education. This leads to persistently lower standards in the Higher education sector as well. In short, the education sector of Pakistan is perhaps the country's greatest lacking.

Economic Challenges

Economic infrastructure and the approach towards infrastructure development is another major concern. Most of the country's industry is located in a few major cities which is a serious vulnerability in a conflict.

High inflation and interest rates have further slowed down economy thus leading to very few new businesses being initiated. Pakistan ranks very low in the ease of doing business list due to unnecessary and often corrupt bureaucratic hurdles that discourage many investors from bringing their capital into the country. ([TRADING ECONOMICS, n.d.](#))

As such social stratification has intensified in the country with most of the political and bureaucratic classes being firmly entrenched and having economic bases and interests abroad.

Energy Security Challenges

Similarly, Energy security is a major problem that has significantly damaged industrial capacity as well as economy in general. Pakistan in general lacks industrial production capacity that can meet the challenge of rapid production in event of a prolonged conflict. Due to the short-term policy focus of most governments, the country has acquired an unsuitable energy mix. Despite not being an oil-exporting country, Pakistan produces a large percentage of its electricity through petroleum based power plants and IPPs. This has also led to a huge circular debt crippling the energy sector while forcing the energy prices to increase and thus harming the economy.

Food, Water, and Health security

Pakistan also faces challenges in terms food and water security. Indian has shrewdly concentrated its efforts of controlling rivers emerging from the Kashmir valley which are a lifeline to Pakistan. The country's planners have failed to build large dams or to seek viable alternatives if that wasn't possible due to political fragmentation and vested interests at the time. Pakistan has also failed modernize its water management systems and mostly relies on the colonial era archaic irrigation systems for agriculture. These systems are not only inefficient in water usage but also lack the capacity to effectively manage any major stress event as made evident by the disastrous floods in 2022 that rendered a large portion of the country submerged by flood waters.

The largest sector by employment in Pakistan is still agriculture. However, due to the absence of long term planning and modernization of agricultural practices, the country lacks self-sufficiency in food security.

Health also remains a major problem in the country. The country's health infrastructure can barely cope with peace time needs let alone cater to a wartime emergency. Very few civilians in Pakistan have any training at all to deal with even basic medical emergencies.

Environmental Security

Pakistan has suffered greatly due to the effects of environmental change. This is evident from the repeated flooding and extreme temperatures across different regions of the

country have had disastrous effects on ecology as well as human settlements. It is therefore high time for the country to begin the development of robust and innovative infrastructure for the management of such eventualities.

Most of the country's agricultural belt is located along a thin belt of Indus valley which has suffered greatly due to repeated flooding. This is evident from the recent floods of 2022 which saw a significant portion of this belt effectively being turned into a giant lake.

Structural and Institutional Challenges

Perhaps the most significant causes of the above-mentioned challenges and the country's failure to meet them are the existing institutional and government structures of Pakistan. Even after 75 years of independence from the British colonial empire, the country is still plagued by its cultural, social, structural, and institutional remnants.

The primary purpose of these colonial structures was to serve as extractive agents for money and resources for the colonial powers. These structures of civilian and military bureaucracies were meant to control and rule over the local population and hence, were never meant for governing an independent nation or for the development of the local population.

Owing to these structural deficiencies, in the absence of the mother country has created a class of entrenched elites in the upper echelons of these bureaucracies who extract the resources for their own benefit through illicit means. These classes of military-bureaucratic oligarchy and feudal-industrial elites are mutually dependent for their survival and have thus successfully seized the political system of the country through successive martial laws and dynastic politics.

National Cohesion and Provincialism

This phenomenon of elite capture has also created a serious class divide in the nation that repeatedly manifests itself through ethnonational or separatist movements primarily in underdeveloped regions of the country. This ethnonationalism is spreading rapidly as the existing structures of governance were never built to sustain the mass of population that

exists today. Hence, these structures have been stretched to their maximum capacity with a significant reduction in their efficacy and control.

Geographic Challenge

Pakistan is blessed with a diverse topography that stretches from coastal areas and deserts in the south to the vast fertile plains of Punjab and the plateaus of Northern Punjab and KPK as well as towering mountains in the northern region of the country. While this diverse landscape is a unique blessing in peacetime, these become a significant security challenge during wartime. The force structure and equipment suitable for mountain warfare is redundant in desert warfare and vice versa.

In addition to this challenge, Pakistan lack strategic depth against its major adversary and there has always been a significant risk of the country and its forces being split in the middle if the force structure in the central regions fails.

Survivability as an instrument of credible nuclear deterrence

An organized and capable civil defense capability is a must from the standpoint of developing a credible nuclear deterrence capability as well. French General of the Armee, Andre Beaufre sums up the definition of deterrence as a "Show of force in order not to use it". The nuclear capability has emerged as the ultimate deterrence since the Cold War parity was established between the USA and USSR and has since remained as a prime factor in modern strategic thinking.

He mentions three steps in the evolution of nuclear deterrent theory .

1. Efforts to enlarge arsenals and capability to target deep into enemy territory.
2. Efforts to reduce the effect of the enemy's initial strike thus hoping this would deter the enemy from a military misadventure which may not achieve the desired effect.
3. Enlarging and diversifying nuclear arsenals to the point where a sizable proportion of the forces are practically invulnerable.

Pakistan has successfully acquired capacity to develop and deploy a credible nuclear force

and is making strides towards diversifying its delivery mechanisms with capability to strike deep into enemy territory. However, there is a serious lacking in terms of efforts to reduce the effects of enemy's initial strike. This lacking threatens Pakistan's survivability as a functioning nation state in the aftermath of any major nuclear confrontation. Concentration of most industrial and economic capacity into a few major cities as well as lack of strategic depth is also a serious handicap faced by Pakistani strategic planners.

A critical part of comprehensive national defense therefore must address the issue of defensive infrastructure meant to protect the nation's population and ordinary citizens. The critical industries including defense related industries must be dispersed in such a manner that it cannot be eliminated or rendered unusable through limited conventional or nuclear strikes.

At the moment Pakistan's population is very densely concentrated in a few large urban centers. This urbanization has taken place in an organic manner instead of careful planning. Hence, the loss of these few cities can effectively render the entire state politically as well as economically ineffectual. Therefore, adequate preparation and facilities need to be built that can house and sustain a sizable population of the country in the event of a full scale war. This setup must also include the preparations to ensure that vital state institutions and functions remain intact to ensure that survival of the state and its people. This element of survivability and designed resilience can serve as a vital deterrent against any potential adversary.

Si Vis Pacem, Para Bellum: Contextualizing Comprehensive National Defense Model for Pakistan

Nations that have an extensive civil defense infrastructure like the Swiss, Nordic and Baltic nations have developed their culture and their outlook towards defense over the course of more than a century and half. The Baltic States are still refining their institutional and national defense infrastructure on the Swiss model. (Osburg, J. [2016](#)) It would be a folly to hope that same outlook towards national defense and level of preparation can be achieved in Pakistan without contextualizing the strategies for the country's

specific needs, socio-economic and ethno-political scenarios. Needless to say that such a program will require careful planning and consensus at top levels of civilian and military leadership.

The basic objectives to be achieved through this strategy should be.

- i. A National Narrative and Unity.
- ii. Organization, cohesiveness and collective goals at community level.
- iii. Training and ability to fully utilize the equipment at hand.
- iv. Maintaining the morale of the population and developing a culture of determination.
- v. Strategically planning a dispersed agricultural, industrial and energy centers with at-least minimal standalone capacity.
- vi. Infrastructure and policies to support and promote a culture of self-reliance and nationalism.

Pakistan needs to adapt quickly and its national security planners need to shift their focus from mere territorial and institutional security to a more holistic security paradigm that considers security of every citizen of the nation as a vital security objective. This shift requires policy adjustments in various domains. Some of these are listed below.

Socio-economic and Cultural

A set of absolute symbols of nationhood that hold sanctity above all else is direly needed to secure Pakistan from internal divisions. To this end it is vital to establish these symbols based on Islamic character of its people. The government as well as the intellectual elite of the country has a key role to play in eliminating incongruous narratives that plague the general public through various media.

Second critical element in this effort is reforming the system of governance and removing elements of colonial structures and culture from national institutions. Without developing a unique 'Pakistan' culture and norms which are followed simultaneously by all sections of the society as well as with all governmental institutions, the nation will remain an easy target for psychological warfare and sub-nationalist elements.

For this to occur, it is necessary to create conditions to facilitate economic growth and allow as well as facilitate free movement of population in currently underdeveloped and underpopulated regions of the country. The key goal of this strategy is to ensure interdependence and cultural tolerance based on inherent principles of Islamic character which can give a sense of purpose to the entire nation.

Education

A good education system should be considered as an absolute necessity for the country's future. It is through the utilization of the education system that an entire generation can be trained to lead the country into the future. For this purpose a systematic review of Pakistan's education system for its complete redesigning is needed.

Ideally such an education system should inculcate patriotism along with a sense of civic responsibility. It should be focused on teaching students useful skills as well including crafts and at least one skill as per the student's choice and aptitude, that can be utilized in real world for example wood working, plumbing, metal working etcetera.

Basic civil defense training including first aid and basic military training must be made compulsory to that end. Schools, colleges and universities can become the backbone of a practical and fast reacting civil defense infrastructure. For this to happen, education needs to be taken as a critical

Energy

Energy security must be considered as the backbone of economy, without which sustainable economic growth is not possible. Pakistan should therefore move towards diversified and sustainable energy options with long-term cost-effectiveness. Solar thermal and photovoltaic power plants as well as run of the river installations can fulfill this objective while achieving significantly dispersed installations to ensure survivability of most infrastructures in the event of a major conflict.

Although, most political debates surround large dams, in event of a major conflict, such dams can become a country's Achilles heel.

Civil Defense

Organization of the general population and institutional set up to provide guidance, training and equipment to the citizenry is a basic requirement of comprehensive national defense approach. Civil defense setups should be established at union council, district and Provincial level and regular training should be incorporated at school, college and university levels to ensure that the youth of the country is provided with a sense of purpose and unity.

The government can also allow associations and non-governmental organizations to exist within a specified framework of rules to provide civil defense training to individuals and communities.

An organized and well trained civic support at local level, which can supplement regular armed forces, can become a vital element for overcoming the challenges posed by Pakistan's diverse geography.

Infrastructure

Pakistan can also learn from the Swiss redoubt strategy of utilizing the country's topography to create multiple lines of defense and supporting infrastructure to assist regular forces during wartime. In this strategy the entire nation participates in war effort to make the enemy pay a devastating price for every inch of gain. Thus, the costs of going to war against such a prepared nation far outweigh any potential benefits of territorial gains.

To this end Pakistan must utilize multiple rivers and deserts facing its primary opponent i.e. India. While the plateaus and mountains of Northern Punjab, KPK, Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir can serve as hardened barriers against an enemy advance.

Conclusion

The full support of masses during the 1965 war was a crucial factor in Pakistan's successful defense against Indian aggression during the war. On the other hand, the result of divisions within played a critical role in loss of Pakistan's Eastern Wing in 1971. In both these wars, the civilian population was largely left to its own devices to fend for itself. The informal presence of Al-Badr volunteers was not significant enough to have any impact on the War. Additionally, the debacle of 1971 can also be attributed to the colonial structures and the detachment created by these structures between institutions and the general public. This detachment in the absence of a unifying national purpose and structures that created a sense of inclusiveness among the population led to the success of divisive and hostile propaganda by the enemy. One can only wonder what could have been accomplished if the Swiss strategy had been adopted in 1965 and 1971.

Pakistan must consider the highly volatile regional situation and the increasingly hostile posture of its nuclear armed neighbor as a call for action to implement appropriate measure to ensure the unconquerable defense. Implementing a comprehensive national defense strategy can have many strategic, economic and social rewards. If implemented with considered efficacy, the volunteer defense forces can be capable of fulfilling defensive role and supplementing regular forces while the regular forces would be freed up from defensive posture and thus become fully available for an offensive role against any potential aggressor.

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