POWER OF THREE

Role of Academia, Media & Think Tanks in Security Reform

JINNAH INSTITUTE

Acknowledgements

Preferred Citation

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About Jinnah Institute

Jinnah Institute is a non-profit public policy organization based in Pakistan. It functions as a think tank, advocacy group and public outreach organization independent of government. JI seeks to promote knowledge-based policy making for strengthening democratic institutions and building public stakes in human and national discourse with an emphasis on regional peace. It remains committed to policies that promote fundamental rights, independence, and pluralism.

Through multiple mediums of public outreach, JI builds and advocates a discourse centered on the values of equitable democratic and social entitlements, pluralism, rule of law and transparent governance. Its strategic security program advances the project of inclusive policymaking for enhancing Pakistan's stakes in regional peace and build public capacity to reverse the ride of extremism and related challenges.

JI engages policymakers, government, media organizations, civil society, state institutions and academia with a view to maximizing space its intellectual and advocacy products at the national, regional, and global level.

Foreword

Pakistan's national security strategy has been an evolving framework periodically reviewed and adapted to changing circumstances. The National Security Policy issued in 2022 is a well-articulated document that contains lessons learnt over several years of conflict management, and governance overhauls in Pakistan. The country's security environment continues to have a high degree of complexity and uncertainty and necessitates a broader engagement of policy stakeholders in security discourse. The media, academia, civil society, and private sector are all useful players in enhancing Pakistan's national security outcomes. Each of these stakeholders brings unique perspectives, expertise, and resources that can contribute to a more comprehensive and effective approach to national security.

Jinnah Institute and the Near East South Asia (NESA) Centre for Strategic Studies, National Defense University USA convened a day-long conference on 13th September 2022 titled '*Academia, Media and National Security*' in Islamabad. The conference brought together policy practitioners, academics, journalists, and opinion leaders to weigh in the national security framework, and the processes through which they interact on national security related themes. The objective of the conference was to examine the following:

- How can the state and civil society collaborate more closely for informed decision-making and effective policy implementation?

- What characterizes the relationship between media and the state?

- Can think tanks play an improved role in consultations on national security?

- How have academic institutions assisted security sector reform in Pakistan?

- How can institutions within the security sector undergo reform?

Acknowledging that each set of stakeholders brings unique perspectives, expertise, and resources that contribute towards national security, conference participants

discussed existing procedural gaps, best practices, missed opportunities and recommendations that could assist greater collaboration between them. The conference successfully enabled dialogue between stakeholders who do not have an institutional exchange of information, and rarely share perspectives on this theme.

The five thematic essays in this report have emerged from the conference discussions. Each of them provides an in-depth review of sectors or institutions engaged in the security sector. Their critique is instructive and aims to strengthen existing procedures in security policy, as well as encourage more robust interaction between institutions producing knowledge and analysis. We are grateful to the authors for making contributions to this compendium.

We thank Senator Sherry Rehman, then serving as a cabinet member and former Fed. Minister of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, who helped develop the framework of this dialogue. We also thank Amb. Robin Raphel, former US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Affairs who delivered a keynote address at the conference, and highlighted similarities between security sector challenges between the United States and Pakistan.

Most of all, we thank the experts who participated in the conference sessions. We hope that their insights will become part of improved policy and procedure and enable introspective thinking within institutions mandated with national security and the safety of all citizens.

Dr. Hassan Abbas

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Salman Zaidi

Director Programs, Jinnah Institute

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Acronyms

Abbreviation	Definitions
APS	Army public School
AI	Artificial Intelligence
APNSA	Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
CSSPR	Center for Security, Strategy and Policy Research
COAS	Chief of Army Staff
CPJ	Committee to Protect Journalists
CSM	Comprehensive Security Model
CPNE	Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors
CTD	Counter Terrorism Department
CJS	Criminal Justice System
DTH	Direct-To-Home
HRCP	Human Rights Commission of Pakistan
IOR	Indian Ocean Region
I-SAPS	Institute of Social and Policy Sciences
JI	Jinnah Institute

Abbreviation	Definitions
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
NACTA	National Counter Terrorism Authority
NAP	National Action Plan
NISP	National Internal Security Policy
NSC	National Security Council
NSD	National Security Division
NSP	National Security Policy
NESA	Near East South Asia
PEMRA	Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority
PIPS	Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services
PECA	Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act
SHO	Station house officer
SPPC	Strategic Policy Planning Cell
STRAFASIA	Strategy, Analysis, News & Insight of Emerging Asia
UNICRI	United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute

Pakistan's National Security

Reviewing the Current Framework

Pakistan's National Security Policy (2022-2026) provides an improved pathway for implementing safeguards that protect citizens from traditional and emerging threats. It has also broadened the institutional setting within which security reform takes place, by merging governance, human development and climate change, as key domains for securing citizens' well-being, and in the process, expanded the scope for participation by non-traditional actors in this sphere. While this is a step in the right direct, however, a host of complementary reforms in security practice, stakeholders' dynamics and outcomes need to come about for a meaningful transformation of the security sector.

Much of what constitutes the National Security Policy has emerged from the last two decades of combat in the War on Terror, and a growing need for alternate approaches to terrorism and extremism, that identify threats, actors, and the processes surrounding them, differently. There has been a push towards non-traditional approaches to security that offer a more wholesome perspective of threats and potential responses, resourced by civil society groups.

The role of experts, media persons, academics and think tanks has been especially prominent during the revamp of the security policy, however, the interaction between state and civil society actors has neither been straightforward nor comfortable. Both sides admit to working at cross purposes to one another, and where their interests align, there is ad-hoc institutional outreach for support or collaboration. There is ample room to create a structured paradigm within which the state and civil society partners can assist public policy, especially security reform.

This has happened successfully in other contexts. In the US, the White House issued a memorandum in 2021 on revitalizing America's national security

workforce, institutions, and partnerships, encouraging the heads of agencies and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (APNSA) to meet regularly with key partners from civil society, academia, media, and the private sector. The memorandum observed that "government cannot solve [problems] on its own; it is imperative that we harness the ideas, perspectives, and contributions of partners."[1]

Most Nordic countries have comprehensive security frameworks that include defense along with social resilience, human rights, social welfare, and environmental sustainability. A notable example is the Finish Comprehensive Security Model (CSM) which adopts a broad perspective on threats, and emphasizes citizen preparedness, planning and implementation,[2] while stressing collaboration, among citizens, government, civil society, private sector, academic institutions, and donors to foster a secure and resilient society.[3]

The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) put forth a Security Governance approach to promote broader collaboration and participation among different security stakeholders. This interdisciplinary approach proposes that assessment of threats and the development of strategic responses should involve policymakers from both traditional security and development-oriented disciplines, namely diplomacy, criminal justice, socio-economic development, police law enforcement, and post-conflict and peacebuilding[4]; advocating for shared responsibilities and the identification of common strategic objectives. This includes identifying common goals and dismantling the conventional paradigm, where security is viewed as the domain of intelligence and law enforcement agencies, and thereby allowing integration of civil society and private players; pooling resources towards collective action, incentivizing information sharing and containing duplication of effort.

Despite efforts to this end, security policy rolls out in a centralized and hierarchical manner that reinforces state control, concentration of power within security agencies, and limited transparency; elements that run counter to the principles of collaboration with civil society, academia, and media. The more traditional practitioners of national security will even argue that centralized

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[1] The White House. (2021, February 4). Memorandum: Revitalizing America's Foreign Policy and National Security Workforce, Institutions, and Partnerships. Retrieved from https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/02/04/memorandum-revitalizing-americas-foreign-policy-and-national-security-workforce-institutions-and-partnerships/

[2] Valtonen, V., & Branders, M. (2020). Tracing the Finnish Comprehensive Security Model. Nordic Societal Security. https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/oa-edit/10.4324/9781003045533-7/tracing-finnish-comprehensive-security-model-vesa-valtonen-minna-branders

[3] The Security Committee. https://turvallisuuskomitea.fi/en/comprehensive-security/

[4] Leao I. & Contaretti A. (2009). The Security Governance Approach. Security Innovative Thinking. UNICRI. https://f3magazine.unicri.it/wp-content/uploads/F3_UNICRI_MAX-PLANCK_02.pdf

national security offers a more efficient response to security threats, especially if there is a war going on. As civil society organizations attest in Pakistan as elsewhere, there are bureaucratic obstacles and restrictions for private entities (such as media) in accessing information, as well curbs on political freedom for advocacy groups. There is evidently a long way to go in establishing principles of openness, transparency, and accountability that other countries have adopted in security policy.

Report's Approach

Informed by a conference held on 13th September 2022, titled '*Academia, Media and National Security,*' this report incorporates key insights and recommendations from a diverse group of policy practitioners, academics, journalists, and opinion leaders. Organized by the Jinnah Institute in collaboration with the Near East South Asia (NESA) Centre for Strategic Studies and the National Defense University USA, the conference served as a platform for dialogue and has significantly influenced the approach of this report.

The primary objective of this report is to examine the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders involved in Pakistan's national security. These stakeholders include the media, academia, civil society, and the private sector. Each brings unique perspectives, expertise, and resources that can contribute to a more comprehensive and effective approach to national security. The report aims to review existing gaps, emerging threats, and best practices in collaboration among these stakeholders.

Complementing this objective, the conference focused on fostering greater coordination, transparency, and communication between state institutions and civil society organizations. It aimed to identify procedural gaps, best practices, shared opportunities, and limitations in the security sector. The insights and recommendations from the conference have been integrated into this report to provide a multi-dimensional understanding of Pakistan's national security landscape.

The key questions that the JI-NESA conference, and subsequently this report, aims to answer include:

- How can state and civil society collaborate more closely for informed decision-making and effective policy implementation?

- What characterizes the relationship between media and the state?

- Can think tanks play an improved role in consultations on national security?

- How have academic institutions assisted security sector reform in Pakistan?

- How can institutions within the security sector undergo reform?

Conference Recommendations

Session 1: Academia & National Security

1. Develop and strengthen long-term policy initiatives geared towards sustainable security policy practices, that adhere to global commitments as well as meeting domestic development goals. This should take precedence over the usual course of reactionary and ad-hoc policy responses;
2. Encourage creative thinking and critical analysis in educational institutions to improve scholarship in security related fields, and to produce better cadres of professionals working in the security sector;
3. Identify common areas of interest and encourage public and private collaboration over data collection and review. Utilizing resources for common goals is advisable, rather than working in silos on the same themes, and reproducing similar research products. Declassifying data held by government bodies will also go a long way in creating knowledge banks and improve informed discourse; and
4. Enable funding streams towards private sector research initiatives where government red tape will hinder flexibility of work plans, transparency, or dissemination.

Session 2: Implementation Challenges for Practitioners

1. Emphasize ethical practices in the rule of law sector and discourage selective policing to ensure even dispensation of justice. Extrajudicial measures must not be allowed against crimes of any category, as they can lead to further damaging the police department and its reputation;
2. Separate powers within the State to ensure non-interference within institutions and no institution should assume the role of another. The mandate of internal security lies exclusively with the police. Similarly, the mandate of policymaking is largely vested in democratic institutions of the country; the only role executive bodies should play is in execution and implementation;
3. Strengthen due process and transparency to improve public perception. The criminal justice system remains one of the most ignored facets of counter-terrorism studies, and under-addressed in the National Security Policy; this needs bolstering; and
4. Align National Security Policy objectives directly with larger public policy and human development goals, as these frameworks cannot operate in silos.

Session 3: Role of Media in National Security

1. Ensure safety and security of media persons. This is a prerequisite to media freedoms, and allowing media to play a constructive role;
2. Build institutional capacity and promote evidence-based research that contributes to under-studied aspects of national security. State institutions and media outlets would not have to rely on international opinion if the quality of local scholarship were credible; and

3. Archive developments and changes to the State's national security agenda, to assist policy practitioners and academics in documenting reform and growth in the security sector.

Report Essays

Finding Harmony in Conflict: The Media and the State

Arifa Noor delves into the complex relationship between the media and the state in Pakistan. The essay examines how the media's role in upholding the interests of the governed often gets overshadowed by its dependence on government revenue and the pressure to propagate state agendas. There are financial challenges faced by media outlets, which rely heavily on government advertising revenue, leading to compromised journalism and a lack of diversity in revenue streams. The essay also explores how this financial dependence has resulted in content paralysis and restrictions, stifling independent journalism, and limiting press freedom. Arifa Noor emphasizes the need for a shift in the state's approach towards the media, moving from suppression to engagement, fostering a relationship of negotiation and mutual benefit. The essay concludes with Policy Recommendations, including the development of independent revenue streams for media outlets and the facilitation of media services through government policies that promote transparency and protect media independence.

The Dilemma of National Policies and Red Tape

In '*The Dilemma of National Policies and Red Tape*,' Dr. Syed Kaleem Imam delves into the challenges faced by Pakistan's national security policies due to bureaucratic obstacles and inefficient implementation. With a focus on geopolitical events, internal security issues, and leadership shortcomings, the essay examines the impact of poor decision-making and the consequences for the country's security environment. Dr. Imam highlights the detrimental effects of bureaucratic red tape on the formulation and execution of national policies, emphasizing the importance of strengthening accountability mechanisms, addressing the root causes of terrorism, prioritizing non-kinetic approaches to security, and engaging civil society organizations in the criminal justice system.

Research as Self Service: Can think tanks live up to their role?

Salman Zaidi writes about whether think tanks can respond fast enough to changing readerships and digital modes of advocacy, while they maneuver the narrow nexus between state and civil society. He highlights issues of outmoded writing, research and advocacy that have few takers other than the state. Within the security sector, think tanks produce content that reaffirms the policy stance of state actors, or cover the known paradigms on familiar themes, rather than

exploring new thematic areas. He provides recommendations on how think tanks can improve their funding, mandate, quality of work, audience engagement, and aim for a better knowledge culture.

Navigating the Nexus: Media, Academia, and Policy in Pakistan's Security Paradigm

Ahsan Qazi explains how the traditional silos of academia, media, and policymaking are increasingly intersecting in an era marked by rapid technological advancements, shifting geopolitical dynamics, and the pervasive influence of information. Pakistan's contemporary policy landscape demands a more integrated approach, where think-tanks inform policy, media acts as both a watchdog and collaborator, and academia provides the rigorous research backbone to underpin policy decisions. However, he explains that the path to achieving this synergy is fraught with challenges: inherent tensions within media's quest for transparency; academia's pursuit of knowledge; and the pragmatic constraints of policymaking that lead to discord rather than harmony. The essay explores how such a tripartite collaboration can be forged in Pakistan's context and chart a way forward for a more integrated national security paradigm.

Academia and National Security: Resetting the Terms of Engagement

In her essay, Dr. Rabia Akhtar addresses the critical need for a closer collaboration between academia and the national security policy community in Pakistan. With Pakistan's strategic location and nuclear capabilities, its security concerns have garnered global attention. However, the discourse on Pakistan's security has primarily focused on traditional threats, leaving little room for nuanced analysis and critical appraisals. The essay highlights the negative implications of this imbalance, such as external control over scholarship on Pakistan's security and policymakers lacking research-based input on emerging regional and global trends. To address these challenges, the essay presents several Policy Recommendations. It asserts that revamping the research ecosystem and bridging the gap between academia and the national security policy community are crucial for informed decision-making and effective policy implementation. By institutionalizing partnerships and embracing critical feedback, Pakistan can proactively respond to complex security challenges and adapt to rapidly changing regional and global environments.

Finding Harmony in Conflict:
The Media and the State

Arifa Noor[1]

Justice Hugo L. Black wrote these words in his concurring opinion in *New York Times vs. Unites States*:

"In the First Amendment, the Founding Fathers gave the free press the protection it must have to fulfill its essential role in our democracy. The press was to serve the governed, not the governors."

The ideal press should be cooperative, constructive, muted rather than noisy and disruptive; a watchdog protecting the interests of the people of the country. In Pakistan, on the other hand, the press' role is viewed differently – to uphold an unknown and shape-changing being known as national interest, to not be too critical of the government in power and curate a positive image of the ruling administration. Press reforms to reflect the governed and their interest, which journalists continue to claim they speak for, get lost in media's endeavors to propagate state agendas. Part of this stems from our social and political constructs in which we view conflict as inherently unpalatable and disruptive. And a forced consensus or quiet agreement on difficult issues is seen as the only means to move forward. The complex reasons for the prevalence of this view aside, this sort of understanding of the role of the press has simply led to a state approach of co-option instead of managing the conflictual relationship the press should ideally have with the state.

1. Analyzing Finance Correlations

Heavily dependent on government revenue, the entire industry now operates in an environment where the support from the state is the way to sustainability and profitability. Biased or compromised journalism manufactures opinions and outlooks skewed in favor of or against another. The financial input from a political party or other stakeholders as well as the largesse of government ads is provided with little regard for the audience numbers or ratings. Whereas the

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[1] Arifa Noor is a veteran journalist, columnist, and anchor person, associated with Dawn News.

media sector's efforts to attract heavy private sector ad revenue to support a free press are minuscule as is. Consider what a recent report on the media writes: "The media industry in Pakistan is completely dependent on advertising revenue. The bulk of this advertising revenue, both in print and broadcast sectors, comes from public and government revenue. In effect, this means that across Pakistan broadcast media is "dependent on the government's advertising spending to run smoothly."[2] This creates a situation where media outlets may be hesitant to report on issues that could damage their relationship with the government or its allies, as they risk losing vital advertising revenue. This model has existed for a while now, consider what this story from Profit Pakistan on media and the government from December 2020 says: "For the longest time, we have been dependent on ads given to us by the government – the very people we are supposed to hold accountable. And with censorship constantly growing, tugging at the purse strings was a brutal but effective method to get journalists and papers to toe the line. The fault here is somewhat on us. This business model was a ticking time bomb dependent on big name editors and publishers having personal relationships with politicians."[3] The proliferation of the electronic press has simply increased this dependence on the state. And the constant pressure from top, coupled with the economic uncertainty of the past few years, has led to a situation where there is little or no debate on diversifying the revenue streams be it direct to home or opening negotiations with social media platforms which are dominating the digital ad share.

2. Content Paralysis and Restrictions

An unavoidable result of media's financial dependence on the state has paralyzed free journalism to the point that news organizations are focused on managing the various stakeholders (from political parties to state organizations). Reporters and anchors are hired, shuffled, or even fired as dictated by politics, a fact not limited to industry insiders but known to the general public. Journalists and anchors disappearing from the screens with the advent of certain regimes and their reappearance on the mere rumors of the departure of the political parties in power has made the reality of press freedom known to all. Reporting has been reduced to coverage of 'media talks and analysis by one politician after another and nearly five hours of back and forth between political players and analysts from seven to midnight every day. Despite the awareness of the shortcomings of this kind of journalism, there is no effort or will to break this cycle and improve the standards. Those at the top are also adapting to the idea that the industry can be bullied or pressured into submission. While the pressure is financial and non-coercive in a number of cases, coercive measures are also at work. And the result is a consistent decrease in press freedom.

For instance, In the summer of 2022, the report by advocacy group, Reporters Without Borders, showed Pakistan having fallen by 12 places to 157th on a list

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[2] Maqbool, N. (2021). *The Electronic Media Economy in Pakistan: Issues and Challenges [Review of The Electronic Media Economy in Pakistan: Issues and Challenges]*. PIDE. https://pide.org.pk/research/the-electronic-media-economy-in-pakistan-issues-and-challenges/

[3] Naqvi, H. (2020, December 20). *How dependence on the government's purse strings is crippling the news media. Profit by Pakistan Today*. https://profit.pakistantoday.com.pk/2020/12/20/how-dependence-on-the-governments-pursestrings-is-crippling-the-news-media/

of 180 countries. Figures aside, the larger discourse in Pakistan is focused on the increasing restrictions on speech; the constant efforts by successive governments to clamp down on mainstream media as well as social media and the targeting of journalists through criminal cases, arrests, and intimidation. According to a story in Dawn Newspaper in January 2023, the government revealed in the Senate, the upper house of the parliament that 42 journalists were killed in the country in the past four years. And a recent CPNE (Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors) report put the number of journalists killed in just the last one year at four. With the lives of journalists at stake, the magnitude of fights becomes limited to the internal struggles of control of information flow between the press and the state; it effectively snuffs out goal of protecting the state against insurgent measures as well as external attacks on the integrity of state.

At the other end, the political players and the state have also reduced their strategy to simply ensuring their "side" of the story is told through the press but in their own words. Press conferences, press releases and then management techniques are used to manage the perception of the general public, which takes the focus off of the larger goals. The protests in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by the policemen after the attack on the mosque in Peshawar in January 2023 is a classic example of press suppression. Even though the protests' coverage did not draw any attention to the more damaging rumors and questions, the Inspector General in his press conference the next day described these as damaging. "[IG] Ansari urged people not to spread rumors regarding the blast as they only exacerbated the pain of those deceased. He clarified that speculations of a drone attack were false and that there was no "crater" at the scene of the blast. Don't listen to rumors, there was no drone attack in the Police Lines," the police chief urged the people. "Police officers are being provoked to protest, which is not acceptable in any case. In these difficult circumstances, the police forcing the youths to protest are adding to our sufferings." By the next day, the story had been pushed into the background and there was little reportage or follow up investigation of the blast. The press had moved on. Between the financial pressures and the ones from the state, there is little space for and appetite for independent journalism and the facts it may reveal. This has consequently impacted the media's drive to contribute to a goal larger than mere coverage of what's happening, or narrative building for the dirty politics in the country. In fact, it has a rather negative impact on state and society, domestically and internationally. A fiercely independent press can play a critical role in a strong democracy. It is the watchdog that can hold an elected government and the various departments accountable; for accountability cannot wait for polls, however regular. Policies, behavior of officialdom, the work of departments especially those whose interaction with ordinary people is routinized and has a direct impact on the quality of life of citizens. This includes police, particularly in countries such as Pakistan.

But if the role of the press is seen to be troublesome and one to be 'controlled' then this accountability also becomes impossible. And this in the long run can also impact the ability of the state to deliver. To give just a small example, crime has been growing in Islamabad but there has been little pressure on the administration on this issue because there is little discussion or coverage of this beyond the daily coverage of incidents, rather than longer stories documenting or

analyzing the trends. In February 2023, PEMRA banned the coverage of the F-9 Park rape case, arguing that some channels had revealed the identity of the rape survivor. Consider the matter of the land of Quaid-e-Azam University that came to light towards the end of 2022, where the land was used to construct a flyover. Despite the illegality of the decision, the issue was only reported on when those associated with the university held protests or took the matter to court. And once a court order was passed, the issue disappeared from the news cycle, even though the judgment declared the decision to be illegal – though it didn't see fit to stop the construction. Over the years, the pressures on the press have also impacted the coverage of the war against militancy. When the military operations first began in Swat, the coverage of the operation was a key part of the strategy to create public support for the effort. This was noticed within the country and by outsiders. A 2009 article by CNN on the operation was titled, "Pakistan army spokesman fights media war".

A piece by CPJ (Committee to Protect Journalists) wrote: "An important part of the military's offensive was to turn public opinion against militants who had enjoyed widespread, if somewhat ambivalent, support. To turn public opinion around, the military had started embedding reporters with its units as soon as the fighting started. Although the limits on coverage were strict, few journalists for Pakistan's mainstream media could risk covering the fighting without being under the protective wing of the military. The military had used the embedding tactic at times in the past, but *this was the first time it had been used so extensively [emphasis added]*."

While embedding with the military is not without controversy, the military's need for journalists to tell the story allowed the conflict to be told, outside of the press releases and visuals released by the military. Over time this coverage continued to decrease, with dwindling interest, the decrease in reporting and the shift to Intelligence Based Operations. Even though there are stories to tell here as well, and they are necessary also – to ensure public awareness about the continuing threats – it is not happening. Because in the absence of an identifiable geographic warzone to which journalists can be transported briefly and brought back, the law enforcement agencies do not know how to engage the former. Or perhaps the need was not felt. Indeed, except under extraordinary circumstances, the tendency is to keep the press at arm's length. The impact this has on accountability needs little explanation. Lack of coverage has now dulled the awareness around the magnitude of the existing threat as well as the support for continuing policies and strategies to keep the militancy under control. Or for instance, the complete lack of information about the events in Swat where residents claimed militants had returned to the valley. There were no independent investigations of how this happened. No wonder then that conspiracy theories and rumor mongering fills in, which is problematic for the state.

3. Management vs. Suppression of Media

The state needs to change its view towards the media and the press. Understanding the need for its existence and its utility, the relationship with the media needs to be not one of submission but engagement. An engagement which acknowledges the conflict inherent to the relationship but also realizes that this conflict can be

managed, rather than making an effort to eliminate it. In such a relationship, the coverage by the press can highlight flaws and weaknesses which can then lead to course correction and reform. If, for example, crime is increasing because the law enforcement agencies are under equipped, what may be negative press coverage initially, can lead to better resource allocation. The semblance of 'conflict' can lead to better outcomes for society. Just in recent days, there has been discussion and coverage of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police and whether it is properly equipped to deal with the increasing incidents of terrorism. For instance, a news report in Dawn towards the end of 2022 quoted from a government report which pointed out despite facing growing terrorism, the KP government's focus on its counterterrorism capacity building was absent ... [the] main issue revolves around budgetary allocations for procurements [and] upgradation of equipment, training of human resource, allocations for operations as well as infrastructure.

It is important to point out that such information is already being provided or leaked to the news organizations but such 'whistle blowers' or individuals aside, the various government departments need a more pro-active approach to news than simply controlling the information through press releases or reacting to what is viewed as damaging news or leaks. Instead, the relationship with the press should be seen as one of constant negotiation. Media managers should not just maintain a constant flow of information but also constantly liaise with the department and the journalists covering it, to highlight the department or organization's account but also manage the fallout from critical stories – and this can be done only if the role of the 'other', the press, is accepted as a legitimate one. Consider that in more advanced democracies, it is normal practice for media managers to offer exclusive stories or access in exchange for what is considered a more damaging story. While this is a controversial practice and frowned upon, it also underlines that the two sides view each other as adversaries who can negotiate with each other to reach a mutually beneficial arrangement which is rare in Pakistan; here, the state's simply tries to suppress the report or to have it declared fake or incorrect later.

4. Policy Recommendations

i.   Upscaling the Independent Revenue Streams for Media Outlets:

One of the most significant challenges that news outlets face today is the decline of traditional revenue streams, such as print advertising and subscriptions. This coupled with Pakistan's traditional government advertising revenues as a source for the media have crippled its ability to remain transparent. News organizations need a better financial model where there is less dependence on government revenue. This would mean exploring stronger subscription models or direct to home strategies as well as looking into ways to get the social media platforms to share revenues. This would also entail merging their various platforms together rather than running them in silos. Developing a better financial model that can sustain the media without compromising its independence is essential. This can be achieved in several ways. News outlets should explore different revenue streams, such as subscription models and sponsorships. Increasing reliance on private

advertising revenue and creating a more diversified and sustainable financial model that allows the press to freely operate and perform its role as custodian of democracy. As a part of extending their funding domain into the private sector, news outlets should be transparent about their funding sources and disclose any potential conflicts of interest. This can help build trust with their audience and maintain their independence. Governments should enact laws and regulations that promote media independence and prevent interference from outside stakeholders and that includes government itself as well. This can comprise of measures such as protecting journalists' sources, limiting ownership concentration, and ensuring editorial independence. While this cannot be achieved in the near future, the role of government in media's pursuit of transparent reporting and analysis ought to be supportive and symbiotic. On way to achieve that could be adequately funding public broadcasters should be adequately and keeping them insulated from political interference, as well as allowing them to provide unbiased news coverage.

ii.   Facilitating Media Services through Government Policies

Government policies can significantly influence the growth of the media industry, as illustrated by the reluctance to grant licenses for direct-to-home (DTH) television services. DTH services offer media outlets an opportunity to extend their reach and tap into new markets, but their expansion has been hampered due to regulatory barriers. A recent report has brought to light that only one license for DTH has been granted in Pakistan, but it has not yet been utilized. This dearth of licensing has impeded media outlets from embracing new technologies and broadening their reach, curtailing their capacity to offer trustworthy and impartial news coverage. The government should streamline licensing processes for DTH services, making it easier for media outlets to obtain licenses and expand their reach. This can be done by establishing a transparent and efficient regulatory framework for licensing, reducing bureaucratic hurdles, and providing clear guidelines for applicants.

iii.   Mainstreaming Collaboration between Media & Governments

It is crucial for government departments to recruit skilled media managers who can not only handle media but also have the authority to shape policies. In the absence of sophisticated media handling, it is quite common for governments to make suppressive decisions that hinder the free flow of information. These decisions, in turn, can lead to distrust between the government and the public. By having media managers who are equipped to handle the press and shape policies, the government can ensure that the public is well-informed and that the policies are transparent. This can lead to a more positive relationship between the government and the public, where the government can be held accountable, and the public can be confident that they are receiving accurate and reliable information.

iv. Strengthening Cybersecurity to Curb Radicalization on social media:

The interrelationship between social media and national security can be strengthened by preventing identity theft, penetration of critical infrastructure security, and women's harassment through a nuanced and multi-faceted policy approach is required. While the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) introduced in 2016 has been beneficial in curbing hate speech and the glorification of terrorism, the complex nature of digital threats necessitates more specific responses.

a. Develop Platform-Specific Responses: The government should recognize that threats from digital domains are diverse and not a single monolithic problem. Thus, Pakistan should develop and implement a range of platform-specific responses to address the unique challenges posed by different social media platforms.

b. Strengthen Cybersecurity Infrastructure: To prevent identity theft and protect critical infrastructure, the government should invest in strengthening its cybersecurity infrastructure. This includes both technical measures, like improved encryption and firewalls, and human measures, like cybersecurity training for employees.

c. Implement Robust Measures to Address Online Harassment: Given the increasing prevalence of online harassment, particularly against women, robust measures should be implemented to address this issue. This could include stricter enforcement of existing laws, the development of new legislation specifically targeting online harassment, and education campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of respectful online behavior.

d. Leverage social media for National Security: While social media can pose threats to national security, it can also be an effective tool for enhancing security. The government should explore ways to leverage social media for national security purposes, such as by using it for public awareness campaigns about security issues, or as a tool for gathering intelligence.

e. Review and Update PECA 2016: Given the rapid evolution of the digital landscape, the government should regularly review and update the PECA 2016 to ensure its continued effectiveness in addressing current and emerging threats.

Conclusion

A number of factors have impeded media from playing a constructive role in furthering Pakistan's national security agenda. With the government and media turning into warring factions over the question of what information the public should get access to, media has been weakened consistently due to its inherent lack of financial freedom. Adopting the above policy measures could help the media report freely as well as constructively aid the state by shaping narratives that align with state's national security goals.

The Dilemma of National Policies and Red Tape

Dr. Syed Kaleem Imam[1]

Pakistan's national security is impacted by both geopolitical events in the region and occasional internal security issues, which highlight policy fault lines within the country. Unfortunately, poor leadership, a lack of rule of law, and impromptu policies are often to blame for these problems. Political unrest and a failing economy only exacerbate the situation. Despite careful consideration, the creation of national policies is hindered by bureaucratic red tape, and a far more proactive approach is needed to collectively address Pakistan's security challenges. This essay analyzes Pakistan's current national security policy environment and recommends ways to enhance stakeholder involvement.

Pakistan's internal security interventions have been beset with bureaucratic obstacles since decades. Despite more recent efforts made by different stakeholders to upgrade the security sector, including the introduction of a National Action Plan (NAP) and National Security Council (NSC), the implementation of policies is still subject to inadequate budgetary allocations or resources for law enforcement agencies; bureaucratic inertia within institutions and overall resistance to change within the public sector. In some cases, inadequate infrastructure and development have produced a set of challenges that make law enforcement challenging (exemplified by crises in the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas). Furthermore, the security establishment's ongoing interference in political matters has undermined gains made through effective policy implementation. Political collusion, status quo mentality, and covert support for criminals by intelligence services are among issues that impede the delivery of internal security.

Bolstering law enforcement organizations and the criminal justice system, as well as implementing national security, all require a thorough and proactive plan. While successes must be acknowledged, there remain tiers of command where the desired results have not been witnessed. An oft repeated question is, why national policies are made, or a new department is established, in response to a major terror incident. The unfortunate answer is that security strategies lose steam over time, and as a result, incidents recur.

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At the same time, it must be borne in mind that State institutions do not bear the sole responsibility for maintaining national security. The burden of national security must be shared diligently by diverse socio-political groups. Positive outcomes can be achieved through collaboration between accountable stakeholders, practitioners with expertise, policy experts, civil society organizations, and citizens. This analysis explores the current context for national security, along with its difficulties and red tape conundrum, and offers recommendations for how to move ahead.

1. Disconnect Between Policy and Practice

i. National Action Plan

Following the tragic incident at APS School on 16 December 2014, a National Action Plan (NAP) comprising twenty points was swiftly prepared and approved by parliament on 24 December 2014.[2] However, certain agenda points were not given adequate consideration, as highlighted below:

a. The apex committee has become inactive.

b. The process of registering and mainstreaming madrassas is nearing completion under the National Action Plan (NAP).[3]

c. In Balochistan, the emphasis on kinetic measures has crowded out the potential of non-kinetic approaches, whereas mainstreaming and community policing are viable approaches that were never prioritized.

d. The reform and revamping of the Criminal Justice System (CJS) were given the least priority, although it should have been at the top of the NAP agenda.

e. Knee-jerk actions such as establishing military courts and capital punishment have been routine options.

f. The comprehensive response plan of the National Internal Security Policy (NISP) was never enforced.

ii. National Security Council

The National Security Council (NSC) remained largely ineffective in implementing its policies. The body is supposed to meet regularly but is in fact summoned in random emergencies. Police – the second largest law enforcement force after the military, the county's primary security agency, and the first responder in case of a security breach – have no representation in the council. In the recent past, it was also convened due to some political reasons (Khan, 2022).[4]

iii. NACTA

Despite being the primary organization responsible for formulating policies

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[2] National Action Plan. (2014). https://nacta.gov.pk/nap-2014/

[3] Mail, E. (2021). *Registering Madrassas*. Pakistan Today. https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2021/03/11/registering-madrassas/

[4] Khan, S. (2022, April 22). *No foreign conspiracy to oust Imran govt:* NSC. DAWN.COM. https://www.dawn.com/news/1686267

and providing intelligence for counter-terrorism plans, NACTA failed to hold regular meetings of its board of governors and executive members to make crucial decisions regarding terrorism incidents. Reports suggest that NACTA is planning to establish its own Counter Terrorism Department, which would involve direct participation in operations. However, this move could deviate from international best practices since the department is a policy-making body. NACTA's structure and functioning needs to be strengthened. Unfortunately, the national coordinator's position remains vacant, and the authority still falls under the jurisdiction of the Interior Ministry instead of being overseen by the Prime Minister. Most of the officers assigned to NACTA see it as a temporary posting rather than an opportunity to develop expertise and provide practical analysis for better countermeasures. As a result, the organization is operating at only 20% of its sanctioned capacity.

iv.   Allocation of Budget and Resources

Law enforcement agencies have been facing a shortage of funds which has hindered their ability to carry out operations and training effectively. This was highlighted in the aftermath of the CTD Bannu incident, where it was reported that the agencies lacked the necessary budget to respond adequately. According to a report by the Ministry of Finance Pakistan, the allocation for internal security in the federal budget for fiscal year 2021-22 was PKR 167.2 billion (approximately USD 1 billion), which is a mere 1.4% of the total budget. This amount is insufficient to meet the growing demands of the law enforcement agencies, especially in light of the rising threat of terrorism in the country.

Furthermore, the lack of funds has resulted in the shortage of modern equipment and technology needed for effective law enforcement. According to a report by the Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies (PIPS),[5] the ratio of police personnel to the general population in Pakistan is one of the lowest in the world. In addition, the police force in the country is ill-equipped, with outdated weapons, and a lack of proper training. Shortage of funds has negatively impacted their ability to respond to security threats effectively. The government should make better allocations towards law enforcement agencies to enable both equipment and training.

v.   Support to Criminals by Police and Intelligentsia

The popular saying *"crime cannot breed until the SHO connives"* holds true to a great extent. There have been several instances where law enforcement officials, including Station House Officers (SHOs), have been found complicit in criminal activities. This collaboration between criminals and law enforcement agencies often results in inadequate action against criminals and a lack of accountability. Moreover, intelligence agencies have sometimes been reported to support criminals under the guise of using them as informers. This complicates the objectives of controlling crime and providing security in the country.

Political support and patronage of criminals has been observed to increase security threats in many locations. Such support emboldens outlaws, undermines the rule of law, and creates an environment of lawlessness.

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5 Sial, S. (2020). *Pakistan Security Report*. PIPS. https://www.pakpips.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Conflict-and-Peace-Studies.pdf

vi.   Inexpedient and Weak Criminal Justice System

Pakistan's justice system ranks 129[6] out of 139 countries in adherence to the rule of law.[6] The legal process is cumbersome and time-consuming, and it often takes many years for the average citizen to receive justice, particularly those with limited access to it, while prominent or influential individuals receive expedient and speedy justice. Although the Supreme Court of Pakistan began taking Suo moto notices on the question of public performance, especially during the tenure of Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry, it has failed to address gaping flaws in the judicial system and the quality of justice provided to common citizens.

vii.   The Establishment's Interference in the Political System

The interference of the establishment in the political system of Pakistan has been a long-standing issue. Former COAS, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, admitted to this interference on the eve of his retirement, which was seen as a significant step towards transparency. However, this admission raises concerns over the lack of a comprehensive strategy to counter national security issues, as the interference prevented policymakers from making informed decisions. This has led to poor governance, which has benefited criminals and terrorists in the country (Hussain, 2022).

According to a report by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), the establishment's interference in the political system has severely impacted the country's democracy. The report highlighted the "creeping coup" and "selective accountability" as two significant issues that have plagued the political system in Pakistan (HRCP, 2021). Additionally, the military's control over media and censorship of free speech has also been a major cause for concern. The Reporters Without Borders' World Press Freedom Index 2021 ranks Pakistan 145th out of 180 countries, highlighting the country's deteriorating press freedom situation (RSF, 2021).

viii.   Think Tanks Hindered by Bureaucratic Red Tape

Despite the efforts of civil society think tanks in conducting studies and proposing Policy Recommendations, their ideas often fail to translate into actions due to the bureaucratic and inefficient nature of the state institutions. This leads to an emphasis on short-term measures for immediate gains, while a long-term policy approach is often neglected. For instance, a study by the Institute of Social and Policy Sciences (I-SAPS) found that although think tanks in Pakistan have the potential to contribute significantly to policymaking, their recommendations are often not considered due to a lack of political will and coordination among government institutions. This results in a failure to address long-standing issues such as poverty, education, and healthcare, which require sustained efforts and comprehensive policy approaches. Therefore, there is a need to reform the policy-making process in Pakistan and ensure that the ideas and recommendations of think tanks are given due consideration and implemented effectively.

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[6] PIDE. (2022, July 2). http://pid.gov.pk/site/press_detail/20247

Policy Recommendations

1. Strengthening Accountability: Ensuring Responsibility of Institutions

In Pakistan the lack of accountability and transparency in governance has been identified as a critical issue that contributes to governance failures and a lack of trust in institutions. Weak accountability mechanisms have led to a situation where institutions are not held responsible for their failures and there is a loss of confidence in the state. To address this issue, there is a need for greater accountability and transparency in governance. Every institution needs to be answerable to the Parliament, and for this parliamentary oversight of government institutions needs to be strengthened, and mechanisms for holding institutions accountable need to be streamlined.

The National Security Policy should be aligned with larger human development goals, so that the strategies do not peter out with time. National security policies need to be developed with a long-term vision in mind, considering the broader development goals of the country, and address the root causes of insecurity, such as poverty, inequality, and social exclusion. In addition, the government needs to focus on strengthening the rule of law and improving the delivery of justice. This will require a reform of legal and judicial systems, including police, prosecution, and courts. The police are the premier security agency of the country, and they should be the first responder for any internal security matter. The separation of powers in the state structure constitutes the norm of non-interference, and institutional interference must be eliminated. Due process and transparency will increase public trust.

2. Tackling Terrorism at its Root: Addressing Underlying Causes

The issue of terrorism is not unique to Pakistan, but it has had a profound impact on the country's national security environment. The National Internal Security Policy (NISP) of 2014 recognized the need to address the root causes of terrorism, which lies in the spread of extremism. To effectively combat terrorism, it is imperative to understand the underlying social, economic, and political issues that fuel radicalization and violent extremism. Madrassahs have been identified as breeding grounds for extremist ideologies. While many madrassahs provide religious education, several have been linked to extremist groups and have been accused of promoting violent and extremist ideas. To counter violent extremism, a Counter Violent Extremism Policy needs to be approved promptly. The policy should focus on countering extremist narratives, promoting tolerance and inclusivity, and providing alternative avenues for social and economic empowerment. The government can work with civil society organizations, religious leaders, and other stakeholders to propagate a counter-narrative that promotes peace, harmony, and tolerance.

Furthermore, addressing the root causes of terrorism requires a comprehensive approach that goes beyond security measures. There is a need to focus on addressing social and economic inequalities that contribute to radicalization. This will include creating employment opportunities, promoting economic growth, and reducing poverty. This must be reinforced by improved access to justice, protection of human rights and good governance.

3. Moving Beyond Military Action: Prioritizing Non-Kinetic Approaches to National Security

In Pakistan, there is a long-standing belief that conventional military forces can solve all national security challenges. Over time it has become clear that the application of excessive military force can fuel extremism and terrorist activities. Non-kinetic measures, such as social, economic, and political initiatives to promote development, education, and awareness, therefore, are critical in addressing the root causes of terrorism and other security threats. Such measures aim to create an environment in which extremist narratives fail to resonate with the general population. To focus on non-kinetic measures, it is essential to cut down on non-developmental expenditure and invest in initiatives that bring people into the mainstream. The development of regions that are more prone to extremist activities is crucial, including the establishment of industries, schools, and hospitals, which will create job opportunities, improve education and healthcare which consequently help dispel anti-state narratives.

4. Collaborative Justice: Enhancing Criminal Justice through Civil Society Engagement

Criminal justice systems have a crucial role in enabling national security by upholding the rule of law and protecting citizens' rights. However, the criminal justice system in Pakistanis best with corruption, inefficiency, and a lack of resources, including a severe shortage of judges and prosecutors. One way to improve the criminal justice system and enhance national security is to involve civil society organizations, think tanks and marginalized groups in policy-making and decision-making processes. This will help provide valuable insights and recommendations for a more effective national security strategy, identify gaps in the criminal justice system and assist with meeting the needs of all citizens, particularly the most vulnerable.

Another key recommendation for improving the criminal justice system is to modernize the date management systems used by the police. This would help improve the collection, analysis and sharing of data related to crime and security, enabling better decision-making and resource allocation. It will also enable greater collaboration between the law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders in the criminal justice system.

Conclusion

Enhancing Pakistan's national security requires bridging the gap between national policies and their implementation, which would need fostering professionalism and specialization across domains, thereby reducing bureaucratic barriers 'red tape' within the system. This would automatically address the interference of unrelated parties in internal security matters, issues stemming from an indecisive bureaucracy, and a subpar justice system. To truly represent the ground realities, national security policies should include marginalized populations, such as those affected by sexual and gender-based violence. Additionally, by improving due process and transparency, academia can better study the nature of national security issues and help align the National Security Policy with public policy and human development goals. For this, civil society and think tanks in Pakistan must be empowered to ensure their proposals are implemented, and their voices are heard.

Research as Self Service:
Can think tanks live up to their role?

Salman Zaidi[1]

Think tanks have come under scrutiny in recent years, following the global crisis of public policy that has compelled a search for platforms that can actually resolve issues, and not endlessly debate them. Think tanks are being questioned for their utility in most countries, especially as they claim to wield political capital and influence over public policy. The critique is not unreasonable and has only increased in a post-COVID global economy where hybrid formats have accelerated the exchange of ideas, and the global resource crunch has forced austerity in all domains. Furthermore, donor governments have reduced appetite for elusive diplomatic investment in 'dialogue', and more stringent checks on the developmental impact of policy research.

Think tanks have unfortunately acquired the reputation for being perennial talk shops, resourced by the world's retired policy practitioners, who wage officialdom via other means at plush conferences. Routine criticisms include that think tanks are elitist but deny their elite means of production, and whose 'overstated' proximity to state functionaries and government policy has little reflection in the policy outcomes they seek to deliver. Furthermore, that think tanks produce disengaged and mediocre research outputs that fail to convince or contribute, if at all they are directed at an empirical audience. And rather damningly, that think tanks become willing appendages to the foreign ministry in their country, undertaking state propaganda whereas their stated objective is to produce non-partisan policy discourse.

This is happening against a backdrop of digital transformation across the world, whereby institutions of all kinds have been forced to adopt technologies they are yet to master. Differentials in digital access have communalized information, and aggravated social dissonance to extreme degrees. When measured against rising internet penetration and digital adoption, it is difficult to tally what forms of knowledge societies consume, and what they sidestep or reject. The paradox for any think tank is then: choose relevance and generate content useful for

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governments or choose creativity and produce research that has far fewer takers.[2]

Responding to fast changing readerships and digital modes of advocacy, think tanks continue to maneuver the narrow nexus between state and civil society. What is their continued role and function, and how can they impact public policy better? This essay attempts to shed light on challenges confronted by think tanks and ways to improve the collective knowledge culture they build.

Funding and Mandate

Most Pakistani think tanks have a specialized policy domain, and function both as knowledge hubs and advocates for policy reform. Many undertake project delivery similar to NGOs or consulting firms, as they have similar expertise in project management or evaluation. Think tanks in the private sector are much more likely to have 'corporate' business development models that solicit funding from international or local donors, although increasingly government-owned think tanks resort to international donor funding as well.

Perhaps the biggest challenge for think tanks in Pakistan, as elsewhere, is the availability of funding. Publicly funded think tanks are better resourced, often with longer tenured staffers who enjoy the benefits of government contracts. However, there is constrained financial bandwidth to launch new initiatives or undertake projects whose outcomes are not circumscribed by bureaucratic red tape. On the other hand, private think tanks are wholly dependent on donor funding or patrons, which makes their sustainability challenging, unless they build endowments that allow fiscal breathing space. Because donor funded projects are benchmarked against project delivery, private think tanks can only use a limited portion of the funding for overheads, which is often reflected in team size and branding capacity.

Private think tanks have greater liberty in agenda setting and mandate and can work on dissimilar thematic areas that respond to the policy environment. In doing so, they solicit project support from donors' competitive funding streams available for civil society. To this extent it is correct that donors co-determine the research and advocacy outputs generated by think tanks, dovetailing their own development priorities for Pakistan with those of civil society's asks. Public think tanks are hemmed in by the state's policy guidelines and are far less likely to take on projects that deviate from traditional research or dialogue. On certain themes, it can also be seen that private sector institutions offer a demand side narrative, whereas public sector think tanks field the supply side.

Are there ways to improve how think tanks find more sustainable funding and more policy-responsive mandates?

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[2] K. Biswas, A., & Kirchherr, J. (2015, April 11). *Prof, no one is reading you* | The Straits Times. The Straits Time. September 19, 2023. https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/prof-no-one-is-reading-you

Recommendations

i. **The most sustainable funding option is to create an endowment.** For securing sustainable funding, think tanks need to reevaluate their business model, and develop a financial portfolio that does not hinge on donor support. This requires some investment in financial expertise to develop an endowment that can defray costs, and over time can increase in asset value. Project funding can still be availed on top of this, but institutional overheads will be well covered.

ii. **Research and advocacy mandates should be checked against national policy priorities.** Because think tanks routinely convene state, government, and civil society groups, they can help determine collective priorities for advocacy and research, for everyone's benefit. Think tanks can themselves take a lead in delivering on this initiative, instead of taking up individual advocacy agendas that neither find critical mass, nor a supportive momentum from collaborators. This was also assisted in a more coordinated division of labor on research, advocacy, dialogue, and communications.

iii. **Mainstreaming participation and diffuse learning will benefit think tanks.** Research institutions must invest in their teams' exposure to other how other sectors work, not just their own. Think tanks run the risk of turning into 'ivory towers' if their agenda finds no purpose with a larger civil society effort. Therefore, deliberate efforts should be made to expand mandates in line with mainstream advocacy and learning from organizations and experts in the field.

Relevance and Contribution

Try as one might, governments are still the vehicle through which policy change occurs, but there is no clear pathway for submitting policy inputs. The interest, attention, and policy literacy of governmental actors determines the role civil society can play in making recommendations, plugging capacity gaps, or undertaking advocacy. Proximity to government helps, which explains why the majority of think thanks across the world are concentrated in capital cities. But the process of providing policy input and its receipt by official actors is precariously dependent on personal contacts; it is often a conversation between individuals, rather than a structured nexus that creates intellectual benefit on both sides.

It could be argued that government departments are set up for policy implementation, not to survey policy perspectives from civil society. This is true – government departments neither have the mandate, personnel, funds, nor utility for soliciting policy inputs – and confirms the ad-hoc nature of exchanging policy inputs. However, it is common practice on the part of ministries to participate in civil society events, or even contract expert consultants (from think tanks, academia, and media) for stipulated periods to assist with implementation on projects.

It is therefore a question of how well think tanks (as well as NGOs working on policy advocacy) are able to attract governmental interest. Much of what is offered up in terms of policy recommendation is often discarded by governmental actors as idealistic or irrelevant; stating that there is overemphasis on diagnosing known challenges, rather than their realistic remedy. Do think tanks know better how government work should be done? The answer is negative: think tanks, like other civil society actors, operate at a distance from the workings of government, and unless tasked to assist, will not be familiar with day-to-day policy delivery challenges. Therefore, their recommendations will be normative, or focus on what *should* be done, as well as what *should not*. But do governments have any time or interest for normative recommendations? The answer to that is also usually negative, unfortunately.

It is equally important to consider whether governments are themselves reform oriented, and not prejudiced towards civil society's audit of legislation and policy procedure. In recent years, Pakistan has seen a crackdown against media houses, NGOs, and private think tanks as well, undermining vibrancy in the policy sector. This has come with an obvious shrinkage of civil society, and drastically altered the terms of engagement between state and civil society.

Recommendations

i. **Personalized contact may be efficient, but parallel institutional relationships must be strengthened between state and think tanks.** While it is true that personal and informal contacts between individuals on either side helps a frank exchange of views, shores up trust, and information can be shared discreetly, there needs to be greater investment in more structured and orderly exchange between state institutions and think tanks. This would seem like extra work for all involved, but state representatives will greatly benefit from a service think tanks are quite willing to provide for them. Giving structure to such exchanges, whether they occur through meetings, briefings, presentations or zoom calls, will supplement the individual exchange, and make the exchange of information and analysis more objective.

ii. **Structured contact will add value to the policy supply chain.** More structured contact between state and think tanks will help both understand limitations in policy delivery, and the compulsions of government. Moreover, it will also help government and state actors outsource monitoring and evaluation of policy delivery efforts to think tanks, as that is the job, they are best at. In some sectors, civil society actors are part of the policy delivery process from the very outset, if not as contracted entities, then as collaborative partners in the process. This adds immense value to the policy supply chain.

iii. **State entities and governments should review their policies towards civil society actors.** The vibrancy of any civil society hinges on the attitude of governments and state entities. At their best, civil societies can be partners in policy delivery, and fulfil the shortcomings of governmental outreach. Think tanks too can play a far more prominent role if states see their value beyond 'narrative' developers.

Quality Control & target audience

Think tanks are accused of producing mediocre outputs, and there are several reasons for this. A quick examination of written publications produced by think tanks in Pakistan will generally show lackluster analysis passing for research, published in obscure journals or reports printed by think tanks themselves. The editorial standard is mostly mediocre, notwithstanding the hard work of researchers who diligently write papers without guidance or training. There have surely been path-breaking analyses and reports published by leading experts at think tanks, but those are an exception to the rule. This Conclusion is similar to what has been reported about the state of academic papers being produced by postgraduates and doctoral candidates in the rest of the country. A race for maximum output undermines any quality that could have been produced.

Several think tanks are staffed by retired government officials, who could potentially be capable peer reviewers, but are not trained in research, or policy and academic writing. Government-run think tanks face this challenge in particular, where researchers complain of "*babu*-culture" or bureaucratic veto over research agenda setting, new ideas, or modern writing. Some researchers even report being admonished for overusing certain key words that do not align with policy frameworks, or producing write-ups that have no evident utility for the organization's policy stance. Think tanks led by academics fare far better, as evidenced in the quality of their research and methodological rigor.

The audience for think tanks' output is also not well calibrated. There surely is a readership within Pakistan, and perhaps a larger one outside, that gleans an understanding of the country through research papers and other policy literature produced. But rarely do think tanks segment their readership or build a feedback loop with audiences, so as to gauge whether output is responding to intellectual needs. Thematically specific research may well assist practitioners or other researchers in their work, accompanied by well-organized attempts to disseminate the material. However, the vast majority of reports, policy briefs, opinion-editorials, books reviews, are aimed at nobody in particular, and their receptivity is unclear. Later day social media tools help enumerate audience engagement (through likes, retweets, shares, or views), but this does not signify that the right audience has registered the message, let alone offer any indication of policy or behavior change. The same online traffic may not return a second time.

This connects with a larger challenge of the digital age. The information explosion we witness through the internet does not mean that audiences are availing information equally. This is true for think tanks as well: costly paywalls and subscriptions for journals, digital libraries and even newspapers means that wealthier organizations will have better access to information resources, whereas the rest will make do with open-source material. Furthermore, the near saturation of news and analysis from hundreds of sources everyday means that think tanks have competition from just about everyone producing content; often better packaged, and more incisive in perspective. The job of think tanks is surely not to keep up with social media news outlets, but to rise above the din of hyper fast information that increasingly stands in for knowledge. Can think tanks survive the information competition of the digital age? From the looks of it, only

a few think tanks have found success in packaging their knowledge products more suited to digital advocacy and learning. The rest are still coursing traditional research pathways and using social media for limited dissemination.

Recommendations

i. **Think tanks must devise more calibrated communication strategies.** Does their contribution lead to policy reform, or impact public discourse? How have they gauged this? An estimate of social media engagement is surely a useful baseline but think tanks will benefit from devising more segmented communication strategies, and feedback loops that allow audiences to become part of think tanks' agenda setting. This is taking a leaf out of corporate practices, whereby customer perception is taken on board in revamping product strategy. Think tanks may well list common citizens as 'customers' of their products but expend few resources in getting to know them. A more purposive communication and dissemination strategy will help think tanks understand how well their output is received, and what should be discontinued.

ii. **Improving quality will build a better knowledge culture.** Think tanks must surely undertake a quality review for their products, especially written products, and webinars. Many think tanks already have peer reviewers or advisors to oversee their content. Even so, the quality of writing, analysis and format can be improved by a wide margin. This also connects with human resource training at think tanks, which needs far greater investment to produce products that can match a regional or international standard. Think tanks also need to pay greater heed to the mark they make on a collective knowledge culture in Pakistan through finding collaborations within the sector, or creating common cause on themes that will assist public discourse. Collaborative networking often helps establish creative niches and enables a more dynamic culture among institutions in the same sector.

Think tanks and National Security

The major question remains whether think tanks can assist public policy with their current challenges. They surely can, and do, but this dramatically varies by sector and the nature of government and civil society collaboration. In the security sector, there are well reputed think tanks that provide research and analysis on Pakistan's security challenges, and there is a preponderance of government owned institutions.

The security sector is a rarified domain though, where the biggest challenge for think tanks is staying power. Network, recognition, engagement are strengths built over many years, far exceeding the timeline of any donor driven project. Therefore '*institutionalizing*' a think tank takes up a great deal of effort before its Policy Recommendations are taken seriously by state actors. This also entails developing a body of work and genuine expertise that backs up knowledge products. State actors pick and choose whom they consult with, and as some have argued, there is a confirmation bias that plays into this selection. On their part, think tanks may also regurgitate the known policy precepts and familiar policy experts to keep the

state engaged, without really impacting policy.

A review of research papers on security policy showed that most authors seek to reaffirm Pakistan's policy stance, without much critical engagement with it its fundamentals, interventions and intended outcomes. The National Internal Security Policy (2018-2023) or the National Security Policy (2022-2026) govern different mandates, but the scholarship around them is largely the same: gratified, self-justifying, and unoriginal. This is not to say that Pakistan does not produce good analysis on security – there are brilliant opinion editorials written by Pakistan's top security experts in newspapers, and their choice of medium is deliberate. The same review of research papers conducted for this essay also showed a predilection for certain themes – Afghanistan, extremism, terrorism, India, Kashmir – which corresponds with reportage and current affairs. There is far less scholarship or published material on a host of security themes that could benefit from a Pakistani perspective – food security, cyber and digital technology, urban warfare, security sector reform, and rule of law, among others.

Recommendations

i. **A lot more is waiting to be researched about Pakistan.** Think tanks must deliberately build up bodies of knowledge on themes that global audiences are paying attention to, but there is little or no debate in Pakistan about them. Even the more familiar themes on Pakistan need to be written and spoken about in improved formats, packaged in ways that global audiences can engage with. This will surely benefit interested audiences within and outside Pakistan, but also assist the think tank in pioneering new research areas.

ii. **More critical thinking and debate needs to be generated by think tanks.** The intended purpose of a think tank is to provide bases for knowledge, policy evaluation, as well as critical debate around what can be done better. In the security sector, there tends to be an outsized emphasis on the security context, and far less critique of policy frameworks, procedures, institutions, and outcomes. Think tanks can take the lead in critiquing how systems work, where they fail, how and whom. This will be beneficial to the work of practitioners and decision-makers alike.

Conclusion

Think tanks become unwitting representatives of a national knowledge culture. They may not have started out with such a mandate but end up shouldering this responsibility. For the many think tanks in Pakistan, there are several challenges at hand, some of which can be resolved through operational fixes, whereas others need strategic repositioning. Think tanks form part of a larger civil society culture, but their proximity to the state and its representatives places them closer to policy action than others. The expectation from think tanks is that they will convey the expectations from civil society and help audits of policy performance; and while doing so, build informed narratives that assist global and domestic audiences understand Pakistan. Most importantly, they enable states and governments to review their own practices.

Navigating the Nexus:
Media, Academia, and Policy in Pakistan's Security Paradigm

Ahsan Qazi[1]

In an era marked by rapid technological advancements, shifting geopolitical dynamics, and the pervasive influence of information, the traditional silos of academia, media, and policymaking are increasingly intersecting. Pakistan, with its unique geostrategic position and multifaceted security challenges, stands at a crucial juncture where the synergy between these three domains can significantly shape its national security trajectory. Historically, each of these sectors operated within its own realm, occasionally overlapping but largely maintaining distinct boundaries. However, the contemporary landscape demands a more integrated approach, where think-tanks inform policy, media acts as both a watchdog and collaborator, and academia provides the rigorous research backbone to underpin decisions.

The potential benefits of such a collaborative framework are manifold: from crafting policies that resonate with ground realities to ensuring that the nation's narrative is both cohesive and adaptive. Yet, the path to achieving this synergy is fraught with challenges. The inherent tensions between the media's quest for transparency, academia's pursuit of objective truth, and the pragmatic constraints of policymaking often lead to discord rather than harmony. This essay delves into the complexities of fostering this tripartite collaboration in Pakistan's context, exploring the potential advantages, inherent challenges, and charting a way forward for a more integrated national security paradigm.

The Imperative for Collaboration

i.   The Changing Global Landscape

The dawn of the 21st century has been marked by rapid technological advancements, leading to an era of unparalleled interconnectedness. Digital platforms, from social

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media to online news outlets, have democratized information access, creating a global society that's simultaneously informed and vulnerable to misinformation. For nations like Pakistan, which stands at the crossroads of South, Central, and West Asia, these changes are profound. Traditional security paradigms, once dominated by physical borders and military might, are now intertwined with non-traditional threats. Cyber warfare, economic interdependencies, climate-induced challenges, and even the global narratives shaped by international media play pivotal roles in determining a nation's security posture. In this intricate and evolving landscape, relying solely on traditional decision-making mechanisms is not only ineffective but potentially perilous.

ii. Roles and Strengths of the Triad

Each component of the academia-media-policy triad offers unique strengths and perspectives. Academia, grounded in rigorous research methodologies, delves deep into issues, providing a foundational understanding often missed in the immediacy of policy decisions or media reports. Their role isn't just to inform but to critically analyze, offering alternative viewpoints and challenging prevailing narratives. Think-tanks, often seen as the bridge between pure academic research and real-world policy implications, have the ability to adapt academic insights into actionable recommendations. They understand the nuances of policymaking, ensuring that academic insights are not lost in translation. The media, meanwhile, wields a double-edged sword. Its vast reach can educate, inform, and shape public perception, but it can also, inadvertently, or otherwise, spread misinformation or biased narratives. In a world where perception can dictate policy, the media's role is both powerful and pivotal.

iii. The Need for Structured Mechanisms

The sporadic interactions between academia, media, and policymakers, while beneficial, lack the continuity and depth required for a holistic national security strategy. Ad-hoc engagements can lead to fragmented insights, with each sector operating in its silo. What's needed is a structured mechanism that fosters regular, in-depth collaboration. Such a framework would ensure that academic research informs policy decisions, with the media playing a constructive role in disseminating information and shaping narratives. For Pakistan, this is not just a theoretical exercise. The nation's geopolitical position, coupled with its diverse internal challenges, means that every security decision has ripple effects, both domestically and internationally. A structured collaborative approach ensures that these decisions are well-informed, comprehensive, and in line with the nation's long-term strategic interests.

The Challenges of Collaboration

i. Historical Mistrust and Institutional Biases

Historically, the relationship between academia, media, and policymakers in Pakistan has been marked by mutual mistrust. Academic institutions, in their pursuit of unbiased research, often challenge official narratives, leading to perceptions of them being adversarial. Similarly, the media, in its role as the fourth

pillar of democracy, has at times been at odds with policy decisions, leading to tensions. This mistrust is further exacerbated by institutional biases. Policymakers, often operating with a limited set of information and under immediate pressures, might view academic critiques as detached or impractical. On the other hand, academia might perceive policy decisions as being too reactive, lacking in strategic foresight. This historical baggage, unless addressed, can hinder genuine collaboration.

i.   The Pace of Decision-making vs. Rigorous Research

The very nature of academic research is thorough and time-consuming. It involves meticulous data collection, rigorous analysis, and peer reviews. Policymaking, especially in the realm of national security, often doesn't have the luxury of time. Decisions need to be made swiftly, sometimes in reaction to immediate threats. This fundamental difference in pace can lead to frustrations. Policymakers might view academic inputs as too slow or out of sync with ground realities, while academia might view policy decisions as hasty or lacking in depth.

ii.   Media's Dual Role: Informer and Influencer

The media's role in the triad is particularly complex. On one hand, it serves as a vital channel to disseminate information, ensuring that academic insights and policy decisions reach the masses. On the other hand, it shapes public opinion, sometimes even influencing policy decisions. In an age of 24/7 news cycles and the immediacy of social media, the media often prioritizes speed over depth. The race to break the news can sometimes lead to oversimplification of complex issues or, worse, the spread of misinformation. This poses a challenge: how can the media balance its role as both informer and influencer without compromising on accuracy or depth?

iii.   Navigating the Balance of Transparency and Security

One of the inherent challenges in fostering collaboration between academia, media, and policymakers in the realm of national security is the balance between transparency and security. While open dialogue and information sharing are essential for genuine collaboration, there are legitimate security concerns that might necessitate withholding certain information. Academia and media, in their pursuit of truth and transparency, might push for greater access, leading to tensions. Finding a middle ground, where information is shared without compromising national security, is a delicate dance that requires trust and understanding from all parties involved.

The Potential of Synergy

i.   The Power of Diverse Perspectives

When academia, media, and policymakers collaborate effectively, they bring to the table a rich tapestry of perspectives. For instance, during the Ebola crisis, academic research provided insights into the virus's transmission and containment, the media raised awareness and dispelled myths, while policymakers

implemented containment measures. This combined effort led to a more informed and effective response. Academia offers depth, rigor, and long-term analysis; the media provides immediacy, public sentiment, and a broad reach; policymakers contribute practical insights, real-world constraints, and actionable strategies. This diversity can lead to more holistic, well-informed, and innovative solutions to national security challenges.

ii. Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Practice

One of the perennial challenges in any field is the translation of theory into practice. In the realm of national security, this gap can have significant implications. For example, academic theories on counterterrorism, when paired with on-ground intelligence, can lead to more effective strategies. Through effective collaboration, academic research can be grounded in real-world scenarios, ensuring its relevance. Conversely, policy decisions can benefit from academic frameworks, leading to strategies that are not just reactive but also strategically foresighted.

iii. Media as the Catalyst for Constructive Dialogue

The media, when aligned with academia and policymakers, can serve as a powerful catalyst for constructive dialogue. For instance, during the Cold War, media outlets played a crucial role in disseminating information about arms control treaties and negotiations, facilitating public understanding and support. Instead of sensationalizing issues or perpetuating divisive narratives, the media can facilitate informed debates, disseminate research findings, and provide platforms for policymakers to communicate their strategies.

iv. A Unified Front in the Face of External Threats

In an era marked by global complexities and evolving threats, presenting a unified front becomes paramount. A recent example can be seen in how nations responded to cyber threats, with academia researching vulnerabilities, media raising awareness, and policymakers implementing protective measures. Dissonance between these entities can be exploited by external actors, as seen in instances of foreign interference in elections. Effective collaboration ensures that the nation presents a cohesive narrative, both domestically and internationally. These examples provide a tangible context to the points being made, making the arguments more relatable and grounded. Let me know if this direction works for you, and we can proceed further.

Case Study: The Impact of Disinformation

Disinformation, distinct from misinformation, is the intentional spread of false information designed to deceive. In today's digital era, the swift proliferation of disinformation poses a grave threat to national security, erodes public trust, and challenges the foundations of democratic societies.

i. Disinformation Campaigns and National Security

Throughout history, disinformation campaigns have been wielded as tools of warfare and political maneuvering. For instance, during the Cold War, both the U.S. and the Soviet Union engaged in extensive propaganda campaigns to

sway global perceptions. In Pakistan's context, disinformation campaigns can be identified during periods of escalated tensions with neighboring nations, where narratives are tailored to serve strategic objectives. The advent of the digital age has magnified the reach and ramifications of such campaigns, with both state and non-state entities harnessing social media platforms to propagate false narratives.

ii.   The Role of Media in Countering Disinformation

Media stands at the frontline in the battle against disinformation. The Pulwama attack in 2019 serves as a pertinent example, where various media entities were implicated in disseminating misleading narratives, intensifying India-Pakistan tensions. However, the media can also be a beacon of truth. Responsible journalism, rigorous fact-checking, and media literacy initiatives can act as formidable deterrents to disinformation. Entities like BBC's "Reality Check" or Al Jazeera's "Fact Check" endeavor to debunk false narratives, offering the populace a source of verified information.

iii.   Academia's Contribution and Role of Policy

Academic research offers invaluable insights into the mechanics, origins, and repercussions of disinformation. Universities and think tanks delve into the psychological impacts of disinformation, its sway over public sentiment, and its potential to mold political outcomes. The Cambridge Analytica scandal, for instance, illuminated the potential of data-driven strategies to manipulate public sentiment during electoral campaigns.

From a policy perspective, understanding the nuances of disinformation is crucial for crafting effective countermeasures. Policymakers, informed by academic research, can devise strategies that address the root causes and manifestations of disinformation. This might involve regulatory measures for digital platforms, fostering collaborations between media entities and academic institutions, and championing public awareness campaigns to fortify societal resilience against disinformation.

Policy Recommendations

i.   Media Literacy and Training Programs

To ensure that media narratives on national security are well-informed and balanced, there's a need for comprehensive media literacy and training programs. These programs, ideally developed in collaboration with academic institutions, can equip journalists with the tools and knowledge to navigate the complexities of national security issues. In Pakistan, where media often finds itself at the crossroads of national security and public interest, such training can ensure a more nuanced, informed, and responsible coverage.

ii.   Research Grants and Collaborative Projects

To bridge the gap between academia and policy, the government, in collaboration with private sector stakeholders, should establish research grants focused on

national security. These grants can be directed towards collaborative projects between academic institutions and policy think tanks. Such initiatives can ensure that policy decisions are grounded in rigorous research and that academic endeavors are aligned with real-world policy challenges.

iii. Regularized Policy Briefings and Workshops

To ensure that all stakeholders are on the same page, regularized policy briefings and workshops should be instituted. These sessions can be platforms where policymaker's brief media and academia on key national security concerns, ensuring transparency and fostering trust. Conversely, media and academia can use these platforms to communicate their findings, concerns, and recommendations to policymakers.

iv. Creation of Centralized Digital Repository

A centralized digital repository, accessible to media, academia, and policymakers, can be established. This platform would house research papers, policy documents, media reports, and other relevant materials on national security. Such a repository can ensure that all stakeholders have access to the same information, fostering consistency in narratives and policy decisions.

Conclusion

Pakistan's national security landscape is intricately woven with the threads of academia, media, and policy. Each plays a pivotal role: academia offers depth through research, media shapes narratives and bridges the public-policy gap, while policymakers navigate the nation's security trajectory. However, the challenges of our era and gaps in collaboration can skew this balance. For a secure future, Pakistan needs a cohesive approach where these entities don't just coexist but actively collaborate. The essence of national security isn't just in addressing challenges but in proactively shaping a narrative that ensures stability and progress. This triad, working in harmony, is the cornerstone of Pakistan's secure tomorrow.

Academia and National Security:
Resetting the Terms of Engagement

Dr. Rabia Akhtar[1]

Pakistan's location at the crossroads of South, Central, and West Asia, has kept the world interested in its security and stability. Further, Pakistan abutting one of the most vital parts of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) adds to its geostrategic and geo-economic importance. Also, owing to Pakistan's possession of nuclear weapons, its security issues have understandably gained traction in academic and policy circles around the world. Consequently, most of the literature on Pakistan has centered on assessing a plethora of aspects pertaining to its security. That said, the discourse on Pakistan's security at the academic and official levels has revolved around identifying and dissecting traditional threats. Pakistan's official storylines on challenges emanating from India and Afghanistan, for instance, found their way in academic institutions, think tanks, and their research outputs. This has been the case because conducting primary, data-based research on major issues, not least Pakistan's wars with India, or relations with Afghanistan, was a tall order. Resultantly, echo chambers were created, much to the detriment of the country's intellectual response, leaving little to no room for critical appraisals of, and nuanced analyzes on, key dimensions of Pakistan's national security. Therefore, Pakistan's actual story remains incomplete and untold.

This, in and of itself, is bad news for the country for two reasons. First, it allows for outsiders to shape and control scholarship on Pakistan's security. Second, policymakers do not receive the kind of feedback and research-laden input needed on newer regional and global trends and phenomena that have a bearing on Pakistan. These drawbacks will negatively affect Pakistan going forward, not least because fast-changing regional and global environments require more dynamic policy responses. For example, to unpack the multifarious impacts of the China-brokered deal between Saudi Arabia and Iran,[2] decision-makers in Pakistan will need academic insights and analyzes to make timely and effective choices. Therefore, this essay assesses the current penetration and role of academia in

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[2] Al Jazeera. (2023, April 6). *Saudi Arabia, Iran agree to continue efforts to establish ties*. Retrieved from https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/4/6/saudi-arabia-iran-agree-to-continue-efforts-to-establish-ties

shaping the national security discourse, and suggests ways through which a new, robust research landscape can be created to help policymakers make informed decisions.

Ad Hoc Arrangements

Various governments have sought experts' opinion when it comes to policymaking. In fact, successive governments have inducted them in various ministries, allowing them to work on key priority areas. However, those inductions have been ad hoc and dependent on individuals in power. This results in little coming out of such temporary, need-based appointments. Also, this practice must not be mistaken for a more coordinated, well-planned linkage between academic institutions and the country's security managers. Resultantly, hand-picking individuals across a spectrum of specialties has not created the required synergy and impact. To its credit, however, some steps were taken by the government to bring academics and scholars into the folds of policymaking. Honorary Advisory Councils were constituted, with the objective to advise the Prime Minister on matters pertaining to foreign policy, security, and economics. This scribe was part of one of the Councils that advised the premier on foreign policy and national security issues.[3] Moreover, the country's first-ever National Security Policy (NSP), launched on January 14, 2022, was a product of a series of consultations with members of the academia, civil society, media, and think tanks, not to mention university students.[4] These conferences and seminars hosted by public universities and government-run think tanks are, for now, the best sources of engagement between policymakers and scholars. That, however, is certainly not enough. Therefore, while these efforts are laudatory, they are not adequate to create the necessary two-way feedback loop between policymakers and academia. Political instability, it must be noted, has also had a negative impact here too.

Policymakers, now more than ever, need timelier, data-driven, and wide-ranging inputs; this is reason enough to streamline engagements between academic and policy communities. If adhocism gives way to more permanent arrangements, academic institutions could well go on to act as government's think tanks. The Strategic Policy Planning Cell (SPPC), operating under the auspices of the National Security Division (NSD), is one body that can formalize engagements with universities and think tanks, with a view to looking into the future as far as Pakistan's security challenges are concerned.[5] The status quo needs to change so as to enable ministries to induct key research findings in their policymaking and implementation frameworks going forward. Otherwise, occasional policy suggestions will not produce the desired policy changes and reforms that are in order.

[3] The Express Tribune. *PM Imran constitutes advisory council on foreign policy*. Retrieved from https://tribune.com.pk/story/1876761/pm-imran-constitutes-advisory-council-foreign-policy

[4] *National Security Policy of Pakistan 2022–2026*, https://static.theprint.in/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/NSP.pdf

[5] Pakistan Politico. (2019, December 21). *Pakistan Politico Interview with Moeed Yusuf*. Retrieved from https://pakistanpolitico.com/pakistan-politico-interview-with-moeed-yusuf/

Policy Recommendations

It is quite clear that revamping the entire research ecosystem, and bridging the gap between academia and the national security policy community are critical to making and implementing inclusive, comprehensive, and impactful interventions in the said domain. Therefore, given the importance of all this, the following steps are recommended:

i.   Reorient and Reconfigure Government-run Think Tanks

The number of government-funded think tanks has increased over the past two decades. Located in Islamabad, Karachi, and Lahore, these think tanks have impressively presented Pakistan's official narrative on key security and foreign policy issues. They have, for example, projected Pakistan's positions on relations with India, Afghanistan, and the United States, nuclear issues, and terrorism through research papers, seminars, and conferences. Further, their being headed by retired security and foreign policy practitioners means that they remain influenced by the State's way of thinking on core issues. In addition, practitioners occupying key research positions reduce space for younger, trained, and more qualified experts to set research agendas. While former officials do and must have a role in shaping the discourse on security given their collective experience, their inherent institutional biases may, advertently and inadvertently, leave lesser room for critical analyzes and out of the box ideas. Therefore, for starters, think tanks should be headed by academics and think tankers who are not only conversant with modern-day research but can also map future trends.

Next, flagship events, not least the Margalla[6] and Islamabad Security[7] Dialogues must become more inclusive with respect to opinions, expertise, and experiences.[8] Excluding young, emerging voices will not help these initiatives come up with viable ideas for the future. If anything, state patronage should be used to enable young researchers to get greater access to primary actors and data. Additionally, given the all-embracing nature of security, think tanks must lay emphasis on conducting research on areas like Artificial Intelligence (AI), robotics, food security, and climate change. Currently, Pakistani think tanks are looking at a limited set of subjects. Many of these government-run think tanks can become the go-to places for archives. In partnership with the NSD, some of these think tanks could be tasked to house a digital library of archives, like research institutions in the U.S.[9] Certainly, this will not be possible if the government continues to be reticent in declassifying archives.

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[6] Virk, M. A. (2021, December 13). *Margalla Dialogue 21* by IPRI opens today. *The News International*. https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/916354-margalla-dialogue-21-by-ipri-opens-today

[7] (2021, March 16). *First-ever Islamabad Security Dialogue starts from Wednesday*. Radio Pakistan. https://radio.gov.pk/16-03-2021/first-ever-islamabad-security-dialogue-to-be-held-from-wednesday

[8] Jaffery, S. A. Z. (2021, March 21). *Debating Comprehensive Security in Pakistan*. Pakistan Politico. https://pakistanpolitico.com/isd21/

[9] Woodrow Wilson Centre's Wilson Center Digital Archive. https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/

ii.   Fill Up and Increase Pakistan Chairs Abroad

There are 14 Pakistan Chairs in universities across the world. They are vacant since 2008, something which has made Pakistan lose a lot in terms of intellectual capital.[10] Therefore, it is high time this wrong is righted. Budgetary constraints must be navigated so as to fill up these Chairs in important capitals where Pakistan's intellectual footprint must be established. More importantly, additional chairs must be sponsored in major universities, especially in P-5 countries, to conduct research in the fields of security, strategy, and defense. However, it is important to make the selection processes and criteria more transparent and stricter, respectively. This will ensure that Pakistan's best minds get to represent the country at the international level. In other words, these positions should be prized and coveted to engender competitiveness with respect to quality and impact. Also, with a view to encouraging scholars from across the country, these positions must be duly and openly advertised across media platforms. Here, it is important to stress the need for letting younger scholars apply for such positions given that they are better equipped to deal with global audiences. This should be complemented by efforts on part of the government to secure, through public-private partnerships, funds for awarding scholarships and fellowships in top universities and think tanks around the world. This will pave the way for Pakistani scholars to work with some of the best scholars in key areas, such as AI, geoeconomics, and water security, to name a few.

iii.   Enhance Research Collaborations between Think Tanks, Universities, and Security Institutions

The conduct of war and the contours of security are changing significantly, especially because of the advent of emerging technologies. This means that security practitioners must be acquainted with new developments that have a direct bearing on their professions. Therefore, timely research-rich input must be fed into the national security architecture. While it is encouraging that academics interact with officers across ranks through lectures and workshops, it is not enough. More permanent and formalized arrangements between the Armed Forces, the Intelligence Community, and other Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs), and universities and think tanks must be made. This is important for a number of reasons. First, universities and think tanks can align their degree programs and research areas with contemporary requirements of Pakistan's security institutions. For example, based on lessons learnt from military operations in the Tribal Areas, security forces can suggest to, and help, introduce new degree programs, including the dual ones, to universities.

Second, like practitioners need scholarly input, scholars need the former's firsthand knowledge and technical expertise, to make their research more credible and sounder. Therefore, developing mechanisms for deeper engagements are a win-win for both communities. The NSD can act as one of the facilitators and enablers of such partnerships. It could garner data from the Advisory

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[10] Yasin, A. (2023, March 29). *Senate body takes serious notice of vacant chairs abroad*. The News International. https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1055116-senate-body-takes-serious-notice-of-vacant-pakistan-chairs-abroad

Portal that it launched in 2021, to gauge the interests and expertise of academic institutions on key security issues. Through these partnerships, students, faculties, and researchers can get greater access to hitherto inaccessible areas and topics, something that will help broaden their horizons and knowledgebase.

iv.   Training the Next Generation of Scholars

Pakistan's demographics necessitates engaging and training the youth. While it is heartening to see young students taking a deeper interest in pursuing degrees in the fields of international relations and strategic studies, they get limited exposure to people, methods, and institutions that could prove instrumental in burnishing their scholarly credentials. Therefore, it is important for academic and research institutions to go the extra mile in giving exposure to students. With a view to establishing connections between some of the best national and international scholars and practitioners, and select students, this scribe has, since 2019, directed and conducted two boot camps and fellowships each,[11] and a leadership program, in which some 83 experts from around the world have directly spoken on key international security issues with close to 140 students and young professionals. Further, the scribe gave them platforms connected to the Center for Security, Strategy and Policy Research (CSSPR), to share their ideas.[12] More of such initiatives must be launched by universities and think tanks. To its credit, STRAFASIA, an online platform, also conducted one such workshop in 2022.[13] This is where practitioners can play a greater role. By sharing their first-hand experiences, they can provide better starting points to young scholars interested in diving deeper into intricate security issues. All academic partnerships with government bodies and organizations must focus on this aspect.

v.   Develop Processes for Academicians' Deputations in Key Organizations

Pakistan should work on building a revolving door through which think tankers and academics can work for specific periods in relevant ministries, not least those of defense and foreign affairs. This will be akin to what is practiced in the U.S. Not only will competition for better research output increase and be incentivized, but the overall standard of research will also improve. Academics working with the government will push for more openness, which, in and of itself, will help researchers going forward. Also, once they return to their think tanks and universities, they will be able to add greater cogency and perspective to their research work. This process, it must be stressed, should be transparent and open to all. The consequent push for excellence will be critical to changing Pakistan's research culture. If anything, this step, if taken and implemented, will greatly mitigate the wide gap between theory and practice.

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[11] *CSSPR Nuclear Scholars Initiative 2021: Meet Our Faculty* Center for Security, Strategy and Policy Research (CSSPR), September 15, 2021, https://csspr.uol.edu.pk/faculty/

[12] Palwasha Khan, "*Supercomputers & Decision Advantage: A Peculiar Arms Race between India and Pakistan*" Center for Security, Strategy and Policy Research (CSSPR), August 24, 2021, https://csspr.uol.edu.pk/supercomputers/

[13] Workshop Session1, Day1, Dr. Rabia Akhtar | '*Future of US-Pak Relations*' STRAFASIA, July 18, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1U8vxmN5lG8&t=383s

All these recommendations are implementable and feasible given that stakeholders are already cognizant of the necessity of getting out of silos. That said, there are two things to consider here: first, this list of Policy Recommendations is not exhaustive; certainly, a lot more can and should be done. Second, bureaucratic, systemic inertia will attenuate the prospect of feedback getting channeled, processed, and incorporated in the policymaking space. However, with more institutionalized rules of engagement taking shape, policymakers could become more amenable to changing things around.

Conclusion

It is reasonable to argue that Pakistan's wide-ranging traditional and non-traditional security challenges, as lucidly identified by the NSP, cannot be met if policymakers do not substantively engage with academic institutions and think tanks. Moreover, the State must take steps to facilitate research on perennial and prospective security threats. However, this must be complemented by the State's willingness to be more open to critical feedback and research output. In other words, the State must not only read and hear what it wants to but also assimilate independent, groundbreaking research that may suggest a different course of action. This openness will only go on to give Pakistani decision-makers more options to choose from. Rehashing old, outdated research through select think tanks will not cut it, not least because Pakistan needs a new toolkit to survive and thrive in a rapidly changing regional and global environment. Here, it is important to mention that all this is not lost on the State. If anything, over the past few years, it has shown a willingness to engage with experts across domains. While this is encouraging, a lot more needs to be done to formalize and institutionalize such engagements.