Crispit - PAKISTAN'S STRATEGIC CULTURE Implications for How Pakistan Perceives and Counters Threats

Index of Topics Covered in the Notes

1. Pakistan's Revisionist Aims and Strategic Culture

1.0 Intro to Pakistan's Revisionist Aims and Strategic Culture

- Pakistan's foreign policy is driven by revisionist goals: securing control over disputed Kashmir territory and hindering India's global rise.
- This has led to multiple wars with India and a persistent proxy war in Kashmir, resulting in significant costs.
- The Pakistan Army's strategic culture significantly influences these policies.
- Understanding this culture is crucial for managing the threat posed by Pakistan.

1.1 Pakistan's Revisionism

- Pakistan seeks to control all of Kashmir despite not having the legal right to it under the 1947 partition agreement.
- Pakistan aims to impede India's rise in the international system.
- This has led to wars in 1947-48, 1965, and 1999, and a prolonged proxy war in Kashmir.
- These actions have imposed high economic and social costs on Pakistan, yet the goals persist.
- Game theory suggests Pakistan should seek accommodation with India to minimize future costs, but this hasn't occurred.
- The Pakistan Army's dominant role in decision-making explains this persistent revisionism.

2. The Strategic Culture of the Pakistan Army

2.0 Intro to the Pakistan Army's Strategic Culture

- The Pakistan Army's strategic culture shapes Pakistan's national security and foreign policy.
- The army uses ideological and civilizational narratives to frame threats.
- It views its conflict with India as a clash between "Muslim Pakistan" and "Hindu India".
- The army's strategic culture includes four key beliefs influencing its actions.

2.1 Strategic Culture Defined

- Strategic culture explains a state's security objectives and choices.
- It's a system of symbols (language, metaphors, etc.) creating enduring strategic preferences.
- This system includes assumptions about the threat environment and preferred means of response.
- Analyzing strategic culture helps understand limitations on a state's choices.

3. Four Key Features of the Pakistan Army's Strategic Culture

3.0 Intro to the Four Key Features

- Four central beliefs underpin the Pakistan Army's strategic culture:
  - Pakistan's inherent insecurity and incompleteness.
  - Afghanistan as a source of instability.
  - India's opposition to Pakistan's existence and the "two-nation theory".
  - India as a regional hegemon that must be resisted.

3.1 Belief in Pakistan as an Insecure and Incomplete State

- The army perceives Pakistan as insecure and incomplete due to the 1947 partition.
- It believes Pakistan received fewer resources and institutions compared to India.
- The army alleges British manipulation during partition, leading to insecure borders and resource deficiencies.
- This perception reinforces Pakistan's claim to Kashmir based on the "two-nation theory."

3.2 Belief That Afghanistan Is a Source of Instability

- The army sees Afghanistan as a source of instability, often in collusion with India.
- This perception dates back to Afghanistan's actions after Pakistan's independence.

- Afghanistan's rejection of the Durand Line, irredentist claims, and support for separatists fueled this view.
- The belief in Indo-Afghan collusion persists, contributing to Pakistan's strategic depth policy.

3.3 Belief That India Is Opposed to the Two-Nation Theory and Seeks to Dominate or Destroy Pakistan

- The army believes India fundamentally opposes Pakistan's existence as a Muslim state.
- This view traces back to early leaders like Ayub Khan, who saw India's actions as pathological.
- India's victory in the 1971 war reinforced this belief.
- This continues to drive the army's narrative and actions.

3.4 Belief That India Is a Hegemon That Must Be Resisted

- The army sees India as an aspiring regional hegemon threatening Pakistan and its neighbors.
- This view is reflected in Pakistani military publications, depicting India as a threat since independence.
- This belief reinforces Pakistan's need to resist India's influence and maintain its independence.

4. Operationalizing and Managing Threats

4.0 Intro to Operationalizing and Managing Threats

- The Pakistan Army employs various strategies to address the four core beliefs of its strategic culture.
- These strategies include the instrumentalization of Islam, asymmetric conflict, and developing external ties.
- Maintaining a forward or close border policy with Afghanistan is another key strategy.
- The use of proxy fighters under a nuclear umbrella remains a core element of the approach.

4.1 Operationalizing the Belief in Pakistan as an Insecure and Incomplete State

- The army aims to defend Pakistan's ideological and geographical frontiers.
- It seeks to complete the partition process by acquiring Kashmir.
- The "two-nation theory" remains a central ideological justification for these actions.
- Islam is instrumentalized to build national character, attract recruits, and justify the conflict with India.
- This ideology sustains popular support for endless conflict and the army's dominant role.

4.2 Operationalizing the Belief That Afghanistan Is a Source of Instability

- The policy of "strategic depth" involves cultivating pro-Pakistan regimes in Afghanistan.
- This involves political influence rather than solely military presence.
- Pakistan uses Islamist groups in Afghanistan to counter Indian influence and maintain control.
- This strategy dates back to the 1970s and has involved training and supporting various Islamist militant groups.

4.3 Operationalizing the Belief That India Is Opposed to Pakistan's Existence and the Two-Nation Theory

- The army sustains public support for a perpetual civilizational war against India.
- It frames conflicts as defensive jihads, portraying India as an ideological and theological enemy.
- This narrative justifies Pakistan's actions and reinforces the army's role in securing Pakistan's survival.

4.4 Operationalizing the Belief That India Is a Hegemon That Must Be Resisted

- Pakistan uses proxy warfare and the nuclear umbrella to challenge India.
- This strategy is relatively inexpensive, offering plausible deniability.
- The nuclear arsenal is used to blackmail and deter actors, including the US, and gain international support.
- The pursuit of battlefield nuclear weapons further complicates the situation and increases the risk of escalation.

5. Conclusions and Policy Implications

5.0 Intro to Conclusions and Policy Implications

- The Pakistan Army's strategic culture is deeply entrenched and unlikely to change easily.
- Traditional US approaches of aid and assistance have failed to alter Pakistan's behavior.
- A new approach is needed to dissuade Pakistan from using Islamist terrorism and to curb its nuclear ambitions.

5.1 The Need for Compellence

- Pakistan lacks disincentives to use Islamist terrorism and pursue reckless nuclear technologies.
- The international community has not effectively held Pakistan accountable for its actions.
- A compellence strategy is needed to change Pakistan's cost-benefit calculus.

5.2 Policy Recommendations

- The US should remove itself from Pakistan's nuclear coercion loop by holding it accountable for nuclear security and proliferation.
- The US should cease providing positive incentives for Pakistan's support of militant groups.
- The US should be willing to designate Pakistan as a state sponsor of terrorism and impose sanctions if necessary.
- The US should review all forms of bilateral and multilateral economic support to Pakistan.
- The US should avoid language that legitimizes Pakistan's claims on Kashmir in official statements.
- The US should consider officially supporting converting the Line of Control into the international border.

5.3 The Need for a New Approach

- Given the enduring nature of Pakistan's strategic culture, the US must abandon its past policies.
- A new approach is needed that involves stronger compellence and a willingness to accept greater risks.
- The status quo is unsustainable; new strategies are needed to manage Pakistan's revisionist actions and its nuclear program.