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

Index of Topics Covered in the Notes

1. Pakistan's Revisionist Goals and Strategic Culture

1.0 Intro to Pakistan's Revisionist Goals and Strategic Culture

- Pakistan's foreign policy is driven by revisionist aims: acquiring all of Kashmir and impeding India's global rise.
- This has resulted in costly wars and a protracted proxy war, yet these goals persist.
- The Pakistan Army's strategic culture is central to understanding this behavior.
- The Army holds significant influence over national security and foreign policy decisions.

1.1 Pakistan's Revisionism and the Cost of Pursuing it

- Pakistan's revisionist goals include controlling all of Kashmir, a territory it wasn't entitled to after partition.
- It also aims to hinder India's rise on the global stage.
- These goals have led to multiple wars with India (1947-48, 1965, 1999) and a continuous proxy war in Kashmir (beginning in 1989), all of which Pakistan has lost.
- This pursuit has imposed significant economic and social costs on Pakistan, including the rise of domestic militancy that now threatens the state.
- Despite the high cost and lack of success, Pakistan's revisionist aims endure, defying game theory predictions of accommodation with India.

1.2 Strategic Culture as an Explanatory Framework

- Strategic culture explains states' security objectives and the choices they make to achieve those objectives.

- It's defined as an integrated system of symbols (language, metaphors, etc.) that creates long-lasting strategic preferences.
- This system includes assumptions about the strategic environment and the most effective means of managing threats.
- Strategic culture limits the range of options available to decision-makers.
- This report focuses on the Pakistan Army's strategic culture because of its dominant role in national security decision-making.

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

2.0 Intro to the Pakistan Army's Strategic Culture

- The Pakistan Army's strategic culture is based on four core beliefs.
- These beliefs shape its perception of threats and its approach to national security.
- These deeply held beliefs are persistent and have shaped Pakistan's actions for decades.

2.1 Belief in Pakistan as an Insecure and Incomplete State

- The Army views Pakistan as an insecure and incomplete state, stemming from the 1947 partition.
- This perception is based on several factors: unequal inheritance of Raj's institutions, a massive humanitarian crisis, and perceived British manipulation of borders to favor India.
- The belief that Britain conspired to allocate districts to India to facilitate an invasion of Kashmir is a key part of this narrative.
- This belief fuels Pakistan's revisionist claims, particularly its pursuit of Kashmir.

2.2 Belief that Afghanistan is a Source of Instability

- The Army considers Afghanistan a source of instability, often in collusion with India.
- This stems from historical grievances against Afghanistan and a belief in its potential to destabilize Pakistan with Indian backing.
- Afghanistan's early actions (rejecting Pakistan's UN bid, rejecting the Durand Line, making irredentist claims, aiding separatists) fueled this perception.
- India's renewed presence in Afghanistan since 2001 under the U.S. and NATO security umbrella reinforces this fear, leading to the perception of a potential two-front war.

2.3 Belief that India is Opposed to the Two-Nation Theory and Seeks to Dominate or Destroy Pakistan.

- The Army believes India is fundamentally opposed to Pakistan's existence as a Muslim state.
- This belief, rooted in historical experiences and India's victory in the 1971 war, is central to Pakistan's understanding of its security environment.

- This perception fuels the notion of a civilizational conflict between "Muslim Pakistan" and "Hindu India."
- Statements by Pakistani military leaders even in recent years (2016) illustrate the persistence of this belief.

2.4 Belief that India is a Hegemon That Must Be Resisted

- The Army views India as a regional hegemon that must be resisted.
- This belief stems from India's perceived ambitions to dominate the region and to impose its will on its neighbors.
- Pakistani defense publications consistently portray India as seeking to become the dominant regional power, potentially at Pakistan's expense.
- Pakistan's position as a "smaller country, as the sole embarrassing stumbling block" to India's regional ambitions fuels the sense of needing to resist.

3. Operationalizing and Managing Threats

3.0 Intro to Operationalizing and Managing Threats

- This section outlines how Pakistan operationalizes its threat perceptions and the tools it employs to manage them.
- The Pakistan Army's strategies are rooted in its strategic culture and aim to secure its ideological and territorial goals.
- These tools include the instrumentalization of Islam, asymmetric warfare, and the use of proxy fighters.

3.1 Operationalizing the Belief that Pakistan is an Insecure and Incomplete State

- The Army defends Pakistan's ideological and geographic frontiers; this includes the pursuit of Kashmir.
- The "two-nation theory" remains a powerful ideology, justifying the ongoing conflict with India.
- Instrumentalization of Islam: Islam is used to build national character, recruit soldiers, and inspire a sense of national duty.
- All wars with India are framed as defensive jihads, sustaining public support for conflict.
- Use of Non-State Actors (NSAs): Pakistan has employed Islamist proxies for decades in both India and Afghanistan.

3.2 Operationalizing the Belief that Afghanistan is a Source of Instability

- Pursuit of "strategic depth": This involved political influence in Afghanistan, seeking a regime favorable to Pakistan and hostile to India.
- This strategy utilized political Islam and Islamic militancy, collaborating with Islamist parties to oppose Afghan regimes perceived as threats.
- Establishment of training camps in FATA: Provided training and logistical support to Afghan militants, including those involved in the anti-Soviet jihad.
- The strategy aimed at preventing Indian influence in Afghanistan.

3.3 Operationalizing the Belief that India is Opposed to Pakistan's Existence and the Two-Nation Theory

- Sustaining public and military appetite for indefinite civilizational war with India.
- Portraying all conflicts with India as defensive jihads, maintaining the fiction that Pakistan is always reacting.
- Use of Islamic terminology (ghazis, shaheed) to imbue the conflict with religious significance.

3.4 Operationalizing the Belief that India is a Hegemon that Must Be Resisted

- Risk-taking as a preferred strategy: Doing nothing is seen as equivalent to defeat, encouraging risk-prone behavior towards India.
- Use of militants as a low-cost, high-impact tool of foreign policy, enabled by nuclear deterrence.
- Nuclear blackmail: Using nuclear capabilities to coerce international actors, such as the United States, into providing aid and preventing strong actions against Pakistan's support of terrorism.

4. Conclusions and Policy Implications

4.0 Intro to Conclusions and Policy Implications

- The Pakistan Army's strategic culture is deeply entrenched and unlikely to change easily.
- Traditional U.S. policies of aid and assistance have proven ineffective.
- New approaches are needed to compel Pakistan to change its behavior.

4.1 The Need for Compellence Strategies

- Pakistan lacks disincentives to use Islamist terrorism or curb its pursuit of nuclear technologies.
- The U.S. must develop compellence strategies to alter Pakistan's cost-benefit calculus.
- This requires both compelling Pakistan to stop using Islamist militants and removing the international community from Pakistan's nuclear coercion loop.

4.2 Policy Recommendations for the United States

- Remove the U.S. from Pakistan's nuclear coercion loop: Hold Pakistan accountable for nuclear security and use of nuclear weapons.
- Consider sanctions similar to those used against Iran.
- Stop rewarding Pakistan for counterterrorism efforts: Pakistan should not be compensated for actions a sovereign state is expected to perform.
- Limit military aid: Provide only equipment and training relevant to counterterrorism, not to fighting India.
- Declare Pakistan a state sponsor of terrorism: Impose sanctions unless Pakistan takes concrete steps against militant groups.

- Target individuals supporting terrorism: Use UN resolutions and other tools to impose individual sanctions (travel restrictions, asset seizures, visa denials).
- Review economic aid: Reduce or eliminate aid from the U.S. and multilateral institutions.
- Stop mentioning Kashmir in official statements: Avoid language that gives legitimacy to Pakistan's claims on Kashmir.
- Consider officially supporting the Line of Control as the international border.

4.3 Overall Implications

- The enduring nature of Pakistan's strategic culture requires a fundamental shift in U.S. policy.
- Continuing with past approaches will likely lead to increased costs and risks.
- A new approach is necessary to address the persistent threat from Pakistan.