**A whole of nation approach**

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National Security, as it is known, involves all elements of national power. It can never be guaranteed by a single factor no matter how dominating that might be. Military, economic, political, diplomatic, all at the same time have to get mobilized to resolve a multitude of multi-dimensional challenges faced by a nation through a comprehensive “whole of thenation approach”. The factors affecting the internal security of a country are usually so connectedthat if one issue triggers, another seemingly insignificant and ignored factor suddenly gets buffer room to emerge as a greater threat than the original one. Pakistan also faces a similarly complex situation on its internal security front. The challenges, although, are continually addressed with the state’s meager resources, our social and economic internal fault lines continue to be clandestinely exploited by the external global and regional actors. Governance, regional turmoil, a stagnant economy, ethnic differences, sectarianism, populism, and terrorism, are few factors that can be named for aggravating our internal concerns. Economic insecurity, ethnic tensions, and sectarianism are unfortunately expected to continue to exacerbate our internal security challenges in years to come.The magnitude of this threat has altered the doctrinal thinking of our security forces, which now identify internal instability as the largest risk to the country.The law enforcement apparatus in Pakistan realizes that the actual threat nowlies inside our borders. We have learned it through a hard way i.e. after losing a limb in 1971 and losing more than 70,000 precious lives in our war on terror. Despite the kinetic remedy so far planned and executed by successive governments in Islamabad, Pakistan is still going through a difficult time, perhaps now is the hardest time in its history. It is faced with various internal and external problems concerning its national security.

Our internal security problem depends, for the most part, on the factors based outside our borders that Pakistan struggled to address in its favor. Our options and opportunities in turning global and regional environment have always been meager.Our very status and identify as a nuclear Islamic country (with a pronounced label of the fortress of Islam), appears to conflict with global developments. Due to our issues with India and an un-ending war against terror in neighboring Afghanistan, Pakistan could not acquire the benefit of any international trade regime. Thus, as a country we remained poor. Afghanistan, India, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and, above all, the conflicting interests of China and the United States, have taken the situation to the verge of an intelligence war that is taking its toll on our internal environment. The Saudi Arabia and Iran factor also increased Pakistan’s troubles at home. The Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shiite Iran, both dismissive of each other’s actions in the region, actually remained focused on acquiring power in Pakistan.Both sponsored proliferation of their conflicting philosophies. This contributed to an intense increase in sectarianism, intolerance, and even contributed towards the insurgency. The principles of moderation, equilibrium, and universal tolerance were forgotten as armed sectarian outfits sprang up across the country.These outfits later became the like-minded sponsor groups for international terrorist organizations.

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Unfortunately, the prevalent manifestation of terrorism still remains the most casualty intensive challenge to our internal security. Attack on minority sects (like the one recently witnessed in Mach Balochistan), assaults on security forces, attack on infrastructure, organized crime, target killings in urban areas, financial crimes, all of these has a direct link to the aspect under discussion. Unfortunately, under these challenging circumstances, our economy could not get any better. Without a self-reliant economy, we won’t be able to maintain a capable army, develop main institutions, ensure political stability, orimplement good governance, all of these essentially required for our internal security.Though the National Action Plan (NAP) was the first step in the right direction, anothercomprehensive government plan built on NAP and implemented under a multi-pronged policy is earnestly needed to address our internal security issues.Pakistan’s national security policy must work out a society centric framework, while also integrating the essentials such asthe political element, the military, intelligence, development sector, and above all the Notfor Profit (NPO) sector working for the well-being of Pakistan’s people.A“whole of the nation solution” will be required while resolving the issues gyrating around fiveE’s (i.e. Equity, Economy, Energy, Education, and Employment). For Equity, mobilization and fair allocation of domestic resources would help address insurgency, populism, and sectarianism, safeguarding the needs of minority communities. The national economy should work in a way that benefits marginalized sections of society. Following NAP, the government prioritized military efforts like the operation “Zarb e Azab” and “Radd ul Fasaad” to handle extremism through kinetic prong. Successful military operations in FATA, Balochistan, and Karachi are displaying positive changes but economic woes are far from being settled. These military operations in the past and those in the future are a must for obtaining essentially required internal peace and harmony to provide necessary conditions for the revival of Pakistan’s economy. For education, it should be extended to women and children leading to the development of human resource, a de-weaponized and better-educated society, and employment opportunity for all through a system devoid of corruption of transparency. The absence of genuine socio-economic development has provided ethno-religious elements and regional forces grounds to exploit and weaken Pakistan internally. Thus both the development and NPO sector can play a role to assist the government in this regard. This far, the plans prepared and implemented to secure internal security has caused shrinkage of the democratic and civil society space in the country. This time, an approach has to be adopted which may characterizethe growing interplay between military responses, law enforcement measures, and people-centered initiatives.It cannot be relegated that civil society has a lot to do with the maintenance of social order, thus an important stakeholder. Understandably, Pakistan will take few more years to undo the damagedone so far to the internal security fabric and repair the holes in our previous internal security plans, but the time has reached to think about a sound scheme that involves all the elements of national power including the civil society to secure our internal challenges once and for all.

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