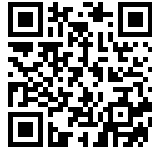


Journal of Public Policy Practitioners (JPPP)

Volume 3 Issue 1, Spring 2024


ISSN_(P): 2959-2194, ISSN_(E): 2959-2208

Homepage: <https://journals.umt.edu.pk/index.php/jppp>



Article QR



- Title:** Strategic Communication in Pakistan: Synergizing a Policy Framework for National Security
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- DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.32350/jppp.31.04>
- History:** Received: March 27, 2024, Revised: May 29, 2024, Accepted: June 19, 2024, Published: June 27, 2024
- Citation:** Ahmed, Z. (2024). Strategic communication in Pakistan: Synergizing a policy framework for national security. *Journal of Public Policy Practitioners*, 3(1), 71–91. <https://doi.org/10.32350/jppp.31.04>
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- Conflict of Interest:** Author(s) declared no conflict of interest



UMT

A publication of
School of Governance and Society
University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan

Strategic Communication in Pakistan: Synergizing a Policy Framework for National Security

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Abstract

Cyclic communications, engagements, feedbacks, and rectifications ensure the accomplishment of a policy. Power projection in International Relations (IR) has transformed to include soft and smart dimensions which eventually bring evolution in public relations and public diplomacy. Strategic communication is the tool of soft power engaging targeted audience in circular communication along with incorporating implementation. Pakistan's National Security Policy (NSP) (2022-2026) is the first in its history at a critical juncture of global, regional, and national political landscape. Therefore, many geopolitical and geo-economic fault lines cross through what lies at Pakistan's core national interests. A comprehensive strategic communication framework introduced in the current study aimed to overhaul the crises of narrative building, adequate communication, and continuous engagement.

Keywords: cross-governmental activity, information operations, national security, policy framework, public diplomacy, strategic communication

Introduction

Strategic communication is the concept of coordinated actions, messages, images, and other forms of signaling and involvement. It is aimed at informing, influencing, and convincing a selected audience to support national goals. This concept creates a fundamental link between national goals and systematic application of processes, strategies, and communication to achieve the defined objectives and bring about a positive change. Politically, it implies to affect the communication strategy in order to achieve the common goal with a perspective and conduct. Strategic communication is not a media specific campaign, rather it encompasses comprehensive political, diplomatic, economic, and military engagement

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with the selected and target audience since the most important medium is the electronic and print media. In International Relations (IR), it incorporates precise, prudent, and pertinent information with the target sectors, factions of governments or entire executive structure of the state with which strategic engagement is to be carried out. The concept of strategic communication succeeds public diplomacy and replaces the negative connotation of propaganda. Thus, it surpasses the disjointed and singular waves of information and narrative dissemination. Furthermore, it refers to a huge paradigm of engagement at national and international levels.

Strategic communication refers to the cross-governmental bustle involving entire social and state fabric in which political ownership plays a vital role. Until now, it was considered to be the military approach or media strategy. However, presently, it has evolved into an overarching grand strategy which is a two-way process for the flow of information and feedback (Cornish et al., [2011](#)). The four main components of communication are; i) information operations, ii) psychological operations, iii) public diplomacy, and iv) public affairs (Cornish et al., [2011](#)).

Every policy depends on effective and adequate implementation. The National Security Policy (NSP) has assumed a focal position in the states' overall policy structure with the conceptual evolution of security and national security. Since, it is an umbrella concept overarching every other aspect of state requiring effective, multifarious, and multilayered implementation plan resting on holistic communication and engagement architecture. Pakistan has formulated its first NSP (2022-2026) in which it directs geo-economics as its strategic dimension for internal security, defense, and external relations overarching all other aspects. The current study aimed to develop an implementation and engagement policy; strategic communication framework supplementing the NSP and introducing a tool of peacebuilding and soft power, dealing with national security imperatives.

Research Questions

The current study focused on two fundamental questions mentioned as follows:

- 1) How is strategic communication a framework for national security?
- 2) How can NSP (2022-2026) be supplemented and adequately advanced with the engaging structure of strategic communication?

Conceptualizing Strategic Communication and Contextualizing in International Relations (IR)

Rhetorical, discourse, and communication skills lie at the heart of meaningful human interaction. Aristotle's "The Art of Rhetoric" is the earliest known text of communication which defines rhetoric as a 'power to observe the persuasiveness of which any particular matter admits' (Aristotle, [1991](#)). Rhetoric is persuasive depending on a range of tools which are the core tenants of strategic communication (Gordon & Loge, [2015](#)). A strategic communication supports and promotes objectives related to management. The ultimate goal of strategic communication is to facilitate a behavioral change rather than the dissemination of information merely. Earlier, the concept of communication was confined to the flow of information only which has now evolved to include ideas aimed at persuasion (Gordon & Loge, [2015](#)), indicating transformation of environment.

Strategic communication is a multistep process which defines a goal or an outcome, determining the actors having the power to effectuate that outcome, learning the persuasive agents for power holders from which they find it persuasive. In this process, the policy is to be formulated through multidimensional approach with a holistic view of realities.

The concept of public relations and flow of information in corporations and business environments has transformed vastly with global political and economic transitions taking place through globalization. In the western world, the renaissance of neoliberal thinking coincides with globalization of world economy. The disintegration of the Soviet Union implicated the world in a myriad of ways. The survival of capitalist democracy transitioned the social, political, economic, and security perspectives establishing that the only system which could save the world was capitalism. The flux of free trade within the premise of international structure created a different ambiance to carry out communication. The power of state to regulate markets reduced with the predilection of the global trend of improving efficiency and productivity. The effects of technological change include increased competition for investment and production. Neo-liberalism considers that territorial borders have less relevance when it comes to free trade and enhancing the role of transnational and multinational corporations. The liberals consider that the role of state, the political regulations, and legal jurisdictions can also be reduced. Globalization is



exceedingly substantiated by the Bretton Wood system multiplying the global trade, foreign investments, and free flow of money across borders. The fundamental outcomes of Bretton Wood system; International Monetary Fund, World Bank and World Trade Organization (earlier General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs) and its elevated form later; the Washington Consensus (the free market blue print) consolidated the outreach of globalization knitting the developing world in the web of peripheries surrounding the core of the developed Western economies (Burchill et al., [2009](#)).

The strategic communication does not only cater to the cross-state and cross societal structure, rather cross cultural and trans-national environments as well owing to the globalized economic and informational patterns.

Modernism prevailing over 20th century focused on the virtues of science, technology, and social change. It has an inherent tendency towards experimentalism. Although, modernism recognizes multiple perspectives, yet it is highly individualistic as the multiple perspectives sprout from the similar logico-mathematical procedure. However, the origin of modernism can be traced back to the end of thirty years' religious war in Europe (1618-1648). Although, individualistic approaches to knowledge were recognized yet conclusions are to be deduced from universally conceded principles which have taken normative form of human rationality. Under the conditions of autonomy, human ability to think mathematically is considered to be the sole way to rationality (Kallenberg & Smith, [2008](#)).

The shift from modernism to postmodernism is epistemological to ontological. Postmodernism departs from the foundational tenet of universal truths implicating those various modernist notions are irrational. The factors of chance and transience are recognized by postmodernism questioning absolute reasoning, principles, and way of thinking under modernism. This departure from the core of scientific reasoning renders poststructuralism thought incongruent and incoherent. The element of splintered human life dominates fragmented literature in postmodernism (Yousef, [2017](#)).

The journey from modernism to postmodernism is based on knowledge production and exploration from objectivity to subjectivity. Lyotard ([2010](#)) added to the postmodern tradition by expelling the grand narratives of

modernism, describing it as the stories of each culture in a particular era. He, thus proposed small narratives explaining social transformations and political problems. Moreover, he defined postmodernism as an incredulity towards metanarratives. The mini narratives of postmodernism ought to make no claim to stability, reason, universality or truth (Yousef, [2017](#)). The element of interpretation of truths and knowledge according to prevailing social realities and norms distinguishes it from modernism, primarily. The dawn of 21st century experienced another development to this evolution, that is, meta-modernism which questions the universal truthfulness of old modernism and fragmentation and skepticism of postmodernism (Yousef, [2017](#)).

Michael Foucault argued that all relationships are political, thus strategic. According to Lyotard, all discourse is political, aimed at silencing or persuading the other side, emphasizing that discourse and its communication are agents of power, societal norms, values and culture (Yousef, [2017](#)). Foucault argues that modernism's entire emphasis on objectivity compels the speaker's will to dominate. The goal of postmodernism is not to let any narrative become the master narrative (Kallenberg & Smith, [2008](#)).

There are two models in a typical organizational communication. The first one is transmission, that is, one way emission of information, while the second is interactive model; creation and exchange of meanings between parties in a communication activity. Until late 20th century, communication was conceptualized from superior to subordinate. Currently, it is a two-way model encompassing symmetrical public relations in which bargain, negotiations, and strategies of conflict resolution are used to bring about symbiotic change (Kallenberg & Smith, [2008](#)). Postmodernism defends the local culture (Kahraman, [2015](#)). The reliance of this paradigm on multi-perspective scenario is based on Nietzschean recognition that there is always more than one perspective encompassing a set of values and these not just simply give different shades of a single 'real world', rather the idea of real world is also abolished. Perspectives are rather interpretations of interpretations (Burchill et al., [2009](#)). In IR, Foucault contributed the most on postmodernism/post structuralism and emphasized the understanding of the forces bringing about a reality/event rather than just focusing on that event. The focus here is ethno-political purpose in problematizing that issue. Ashley's contribution to the paradigm is also based on post-positivist legacy

of Kant's philosophical critique of empiricism. He emphasized to understand the decisions of power politics in anarchic international order by deconstructing the forces behind those decisions (Burchill et al., [2009](#)).

Globalization created interdependence in the world which requires interaction among state and non-state actors at various levels. In wake of changing security dynamics after the Cold War, traditional paradigms defining national security, national interests, and power have also changed. Power is a contested concept in IR. Traditionally, it is described as the ability to perform certain acts and control others. The test of grand power is a war which establishes the proof of the ability to change other's behavior. Globalization and interdependence led to the rapid growth of private actors and other forms of power, such as, communication, organizational and institutional skills, and manipulation of interdependence. With the reduction of government's role in regulating markets, power is diffused to private transnational actors resulting in the transformation of national interests. In this scenario, new power resources, such as effective communication may prove more relevant to develop and use multilateral institutions (Nye, [2021](#)). Power is passing from "capital rich to information rich" based on intangible forms of culture, ideology, and institutions (Nye, [2021](#)). After Cold War, neoliberal economic and democratic order of the world required unconventional projection and dissemination of power. Joseph S. Nye propagated the use of *Soft Power* tools in this inherently changed world. The co-optive power relies on the abilities of a state to getting others what they want, while the soft power is based on cultural attractions, ideology, and international institutions. It is a process to structure a situation so that other countries define preferences and interests consistent with its own (Nye, [2021](#)). Power brings about change in others' behavior converging with one's own interests. Nye recognized strategic communication, propaganda, and information as tools of soft power. Most of this power comes from civil society rather than the government (Nye, [2021](#)).

The transformation of global structure with multiple actors wielding the power from different directions necessitates concomitant responses. The literature of IR is quite rich in explaining and contextualizing the propaganda, diplomacy, information warfare, media, communication, and recently the hybrid warfare. The electronic media and now the social media have diverted the center of gravity of controlling and exercising the power of state to generate and disseminate the flow of information suitable to

national interests. The non-state actors have a more critical role in orchestrating the narrative suitable to various actors.

The diplomacy is done through various tracks not just through government to government. Furthermore, several other actors, media, interest groups, and international organizations also penetrate into this process at various levels. The flow of information from the diplomatic mission of one state to another is just one way of a complex network of various communication channels. A plausible and well-formulated policy framework is required to address and manage the cyclic flow of information, narratives, and feedbacks through multi-pronged and multi-faceted channels.

Defining Strategic Communication for Pakistan

Strategic communication is the necessary feature of all political and diplomatic practices presently. It encompasses an inherent sensitivity to the international ethics, global institutional norms, respecting the sovereignty of states with strategic sensitivity to the local cultural ethics. Strategic communication simplifies, obfuscates, and caveats the matters of facts which cannot function properly without sensitivity to the local norms and culture (Aoi, 2017). Initially, propaganda was merely known to influence people. There was no good or bad connotation attached to it. However, it is now considered as a negative set of activities manifesting manipulation of rival’s information. Strategic communication is now preferred as an encompassing term dealing with information management of a state or government. This is a grand informational plan working at strategic level, while information operations are at tactical and operational level (Plowman & Wakefield, 2013). Strategic communication is employed by states to achieve national interests and overarching goals. However, still there is no unified term or definition.

Table 1
Literature Review

Scholar	Definition	Key inferences
Paul (2011)	“Coordinated actions, messages, images, and other forms of signaling or engagement intended to inform, influence or persuade selected audiences in support of national objectives” (p. 3).	1.Dissemination of information by all means 2.Engagement 3.Persuasion

Scholar	Definition	Key inferences
Farewell (2012)	“The use of words, images, or symbols to influence the attitudes and opinions of target audiences to shape their behavior in order to advance interests or policies, or to achieve objectives” (p. 13).	1. Influence attitudes and opinions 2. Target audience 3. Advancement of one’s interests and related policies
Bolt (2019) Bolt (2018)	“Strategic communication is the projection of foreign and security policies aimed at changing the attitudes and behaviors of target audiences to achieve strategic effects using words, images, actions, and non-actions in the national interests (p. 94).	1. Projection of foreign and security policies 2. Strategic effects on target audience
Joints Chiefs of Staff (2019).	“The focused US government’s efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, and preserve conditions for the advancement of US government’s interest, policies, and objectives through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of national power” (p. 925).	1. Understand and engage 2. Strengthen and transform recipient environment. 3. Synchronization of actions and instruments of national power
Ministry of Defense (2019).	“Efforts to advance national interests using defense as a means of communication to influence the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of audiences” (p. 2).	1. Defence as means of communication 2. Influence beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors
Aoi (2017)	“The coordinated and appropriate use of NATO communications, activities, and operations in support of alliance policies, operations, and activities and in order to advance NATO’s aims” (p. 77).	1. All means of communication to pursue the interests of alliance

The dissection of dominant literature and definitions of strategic communication delineate that it is a continuous process to engage the target

audience or key receivers in accordance with the national interests and objectives. The ultimate audience can be reached by all means of communication. Moreover, strategic communication refers to the ultimate projection of state's foreign and security policies. However, it requires a comprehensive and composite narrative encompassing the national objectives. The entire process of strategic communication is intrinsically sensitive to the norms, traditions, cultures, and values of all sides.

A single national objective may be carried forward through various sub-narratives suitable to the targets with appropriate and different channels corresponding best to the environment. This process also encapsulates complementary procedures and communications to ultimately transform the environment in a well-versed way in order to receive the narrative and eventually cogent through incentives for persuasion. If the perspectives, beliefs, and norms of the target audience are transformed according to their requirements then there would be natural convergence of national interests, thus meeting the goals.

Strategic communication is not merely employed to engage external actors, rather it also engages a state's own society in order to receive and accept the narrative to bring about necessary change within if needed. Strategic communication for Pakistan can be defined as a comprehensive policy framework employing conventional and non-conventional communication tools, disseminating well-defined national narrative through government-to-government diplomacy, economic diplomacy, private sectors, public diplomacy, media, education, rural and urban communities, public private partnerships, and enabling sub sector.

Strategic Communication: Implementing, Perfecting, and Augmenting National Security Policy/Strategy

Strategic communication has evolved to the point where it is considered as the fundamental element of implementing national security policies. Christopher Paul recognized the essential relationship between national security and strategic communication. It was established that those national objectives, integrating issues, audience, and stakeholders become a part of policymaking and create an entire informative environment (Cornish et al., [2011](#)). However, there is a lack of comprehensive policy for strategic communication and thus it continues to serve as an iterative process. Hitherto, the basic element of effective communication remains information

management which is short term. Influencing the environment towards transformation conducive for the achievement of goals is medium term, yet strategic communication is long term. It provides a comprehensive and thorough skeleton for global engagement. Moreover, it pursues the ends of national security both at home and overseas, becoming an interface between policy and actions. Additionally, it also provides competence and credibility to the government on an international level, thus enhancing coherence and consistency within. In the parliamentary systems of democracy, complex relationships between executive, judiciary, legislation, and electorate requires equilibrium (Cornish et al., [2011](#)). Since, it caters to two-way communication, thus enables the national narrative to penetrate into the required fora through various agents (formal and informal domestically and internationally). The long-term impact is created when it reciprocates the same procedure and brings back feedback from target audience to spin the wheel of policy evolution. It does not merely disseminate the narrative, rather it also counters the opposing narratives at numerous fora and through various agents.

Conflicts are now more information based posing multifarious threats compounding security. This process underlined the defense support and complemented the phases of post insurgency operations and conflict resolutions (Kiran, [2016](#)). There have been various stages of the evolution of strategic communication and its unrecognized links with national security during the last century which include

- Enemy or Combat Propaganda (WWI)
- Political Warfare (UK)
- Psychological Warfare (US, WW II)
- Psychological Operations (1950s onwards)
- Information Warfare (1991-1996)
- Information Operations (1996-present)
- Perception Management (Post 9/11)
- Strategic Communication (Kiran, [2016](#))

After the World War II, the national defense was always considered to be the national security. The conceptual and paradigm evolution, though

had started earlier, expedited after the Cold War. Globalization, becoming a catalyst in this process took into account politics, economics, society, and resources from the perspective of national interest (Ali & Patman, [2019](#)). The US NSP can be defined as NSP is primarily concerned with formulating and implementing national strategy involving the threat or use of force to create favorable environment for US national interests (Sarkesian et al., [2008](#)). This definition underlines that the core of formulating policy is to achieve national objectives as well as to maneuver feasible environment complementing and easing the process to achieve national goals. National security integrally encompasses the value system of the state (Sarkesian et al., [2008](#)). During the time period of Cold War, various scholars revisited the connotation of national security.

Wolfers ([1952](#)) considered that national security revolved around ambiguities, while Lippmann associated it with the preservation and security of the core values of states. However, the pursuit of interest and security by each state creates dilemma for others (Wolfers, [1952](#)). Baldwin recognized other factors as well at the height of Cold War, such as physical safety, economic welfare, autonomy, and psychological well-being (Baldwin, [2018](#)). Lester Brown stressed the economy for the pursuit and sustainability of national security, however, he put core emphasis on natural resources (Brown, [1986](#)). Richard Ullman further established this concept by maintaining that any factor which narrows down the options for a state and puts pressure on resources and inhabitants actually refers to issues of national security (Ullman, [1983](#)). Barry Buzan linked national security with individual security (Buzan, [1983](#)). Further development of the concept of national security encompasses the broad contours of societal aspects of human security (Waeber, [1995](#)).

Pakistan formulated its first ever NSP (2022-2026) in 2022 after institutional, academic, and policy deliberation of seven years. The fundamental concept, on which this policy is based, is human centric approach which insinuates at encapsulating all the ingredients of national security linked through symbiotic relationship (Government of Pakistan, [2022](#)). According to this policy, Pakistan recognizes human security as the foremost challenge along with traditional security challenges. In human security, the economic disparity at domestic level and economic security at international level, are considered as the basic challenges. National cohesion within the state is hindered by socio-economic inequalities, identity and culture, as well as menaces of governance and institutional

capacity. The emphasis on economic convalescence is based on the continuous degradation due to vertical and horizontal inequalities and crisis of growth and development, trade contraction and obstacles in connectivity promotion, fiscal mismanagement, energy insecurity, lower educational and technological development, and ignorance of human resource optimization. The traditional security challenges recognize all conventional, territorial, and nuclear issues with an addition of space and hybrid war. In internal security terrorism, extremism, violent sub-nationalisms, and organized crime are considered as primary threats (Government of Pakistan, [2022](#)). In the rapidly transforming global strategic environment, the dimension of foreign policy requires precision. The challenges put forward by this policy render the traditional sources of diplomacy and conflict resolution as inadequate and inappropriate. The primary objective to achieve national security, that is, peace is achieved and sustained through a cyclic process of multifold and multilevel engagements.

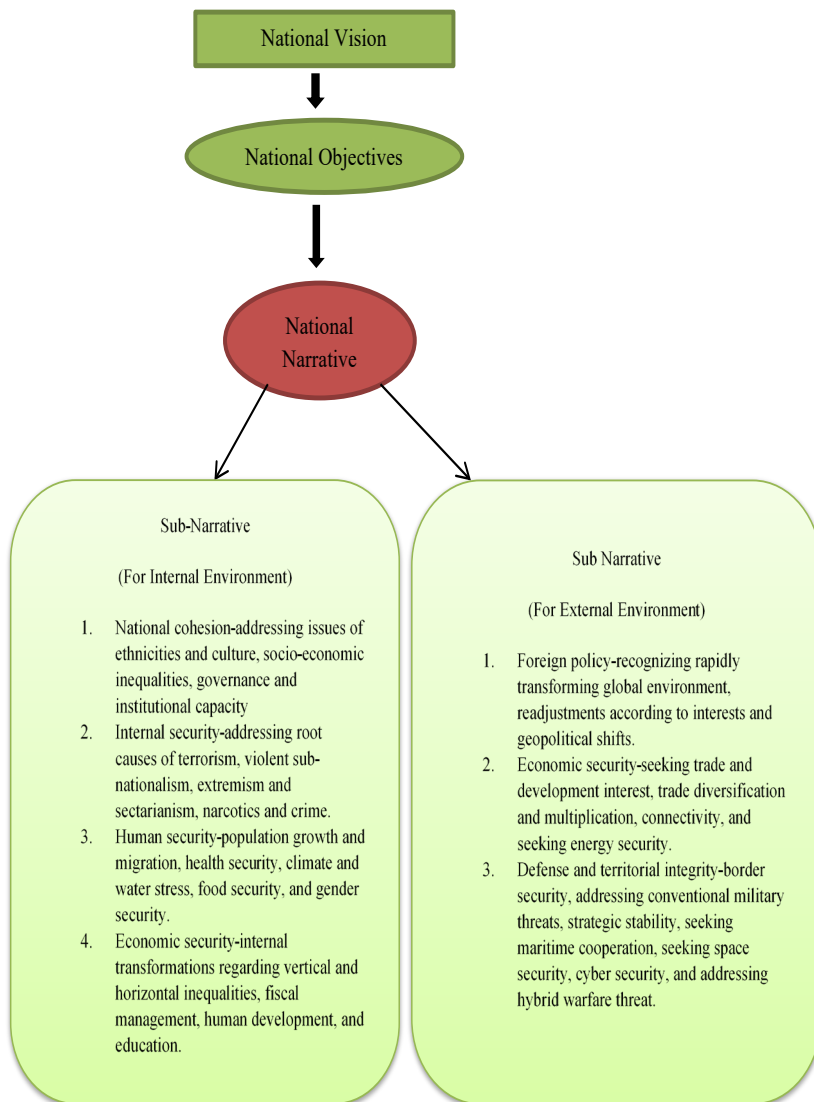
The NSP (2022-2026) highlights major problems faced by Pakistan on internal and external forms which it incorporates as objectives, however, lacks the consolidated and comprehensive approach to mention the actual issues in relevance to its point of origin. The policy covers span of four years, whereas the NSPs or strategies are yearly activities as to respond to short term and immediate national and international issues.

Strategic Communication Policy Framework for Pakistan

The NSP (2022-2026) highlights the objectives achieved by any country as the ends and goals. However, the detailed strategy to achieve the goals requires a framework with detailed action plan to coordinate the state organs and social fabric in order to carry out this task. NSP sets varied objectives every year. However, the framework and architecture of its implementation requires continued, comprehensive, and overarching efforts.

The national policies initiate with the formulation of a national objective subservient to the national vision. The national vision is communicated through a grand narrative of a state. Its effective dissemination within the society and translation into foreign policy are crucially significant. The entire web of strategic communication carries out this process of diffusion initiating with narrative building with inclusion of all stakeholders.

Figure 1
Strategic Communication Framework



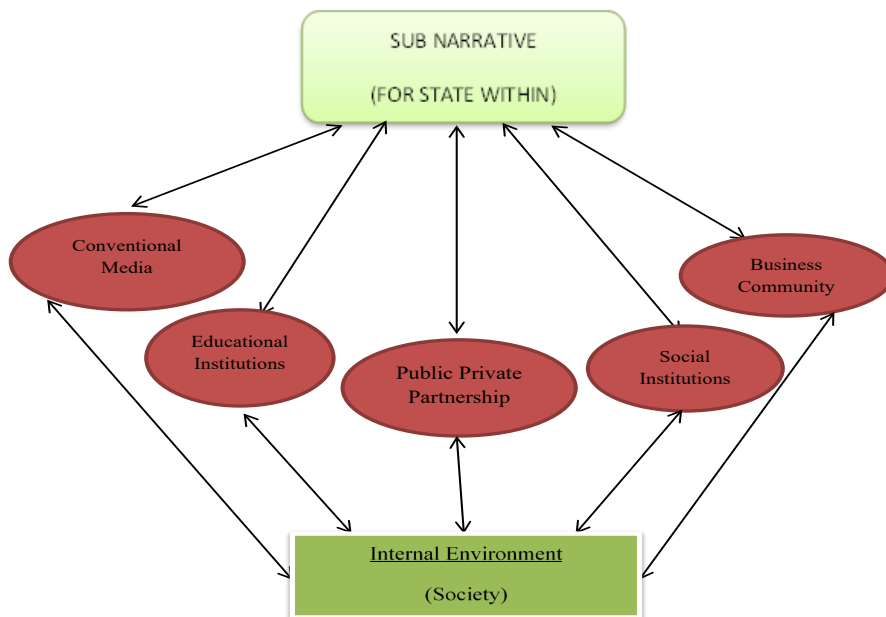
The next stage of narrative building is to divide the grand narrative into two main sub-narratives catering to external fronts of state and the other for the internal state and social environment. NSP determines internal challenges as national cohesion, internal security, human security, and

economic security. Broadly, the framework involves all the social and state institutions overseeing the said sectors.

Overall, the sub-narrative for the external environment gets input from the perspective of foreign policy. However, the NSP determines the issues of foreign policy according to changing geopolitical and geo-economic global strategic environment and varied nature of threats of national sovereignty, integrity, and territoriality. Since, the NSP has determined economic security to be the fundamental foreign policy issue, it requires a complete and comprehensive implementation plan. The sub-narrative for the state's internal environment and social structure requires widespread and constructive engagement from the overall sectors. The cyclic process of strategic communication requires a strong input from the state and society to build up a direction for narrative and its subsequent dissemination and transformation in environment through this. The concomitant incorporation of feedback is an integral part of this cycle. The role of conventional media, educational institutions, social institutions, and business community is critical. A significant aspect of this involves partnership and collaboration of public and private sectors.

Figure 2

Strategic communication within domestic environment

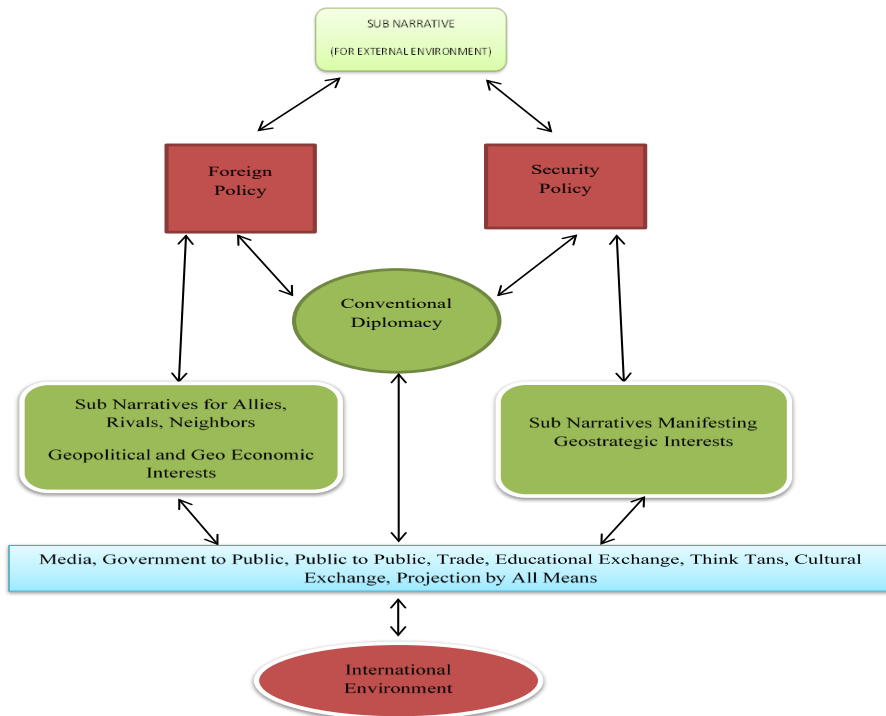


The other half of the grand national narrative and its implementation is directly linked to foreign relationships. There are two fundamental ingredients to this, for instance foreign policy input and security policy input. This input leads to the development of a grand narrative according to the national goals. However, the challenges and opportunities of global strategic environment and related transformations require the dissection of narrative into small but jointed and connected messages for regional, extra regional, inter regional, and global circumstances.

However, here the role of private sector, private individuals, educational institutions, media, think tanks and people to people cultural, intellectual and business collaborations is critically important to pursue strategic communication. It, if in liaison with and supported by state institutions, can bring about effective outcomes by transforming the target environment and audience behavior, ultimately leading towards the achievement of goals.

Figure 3

Strategic communication in international environment



Implementation of Strategic Communication

In 2010, the White House established a strategic communication set up under the office of Vice President Joe Biden. This cell formulated the first framework for national security strategy of US in which the foundation is to foster the ‘culture of communication throughout government’. The engagement through understanding attitudes, opinions, grievances, and concerns of people is the bedrock of strategic communication implementation. The messages conveyed through actions are far more impactful than policies and commitments. Major pillars of this framework include synchronization, deliberate communication, and engagement. The coordinated effort at national level mobilizes the factions of community and stakeholders required for communication. The national security community plays a leading role here which is mainly supported by the Department of State and Department of Defense. Under the first tier, the Board of Governors of media centers functions to regulate and supervise the dissemination process. The next layer includes the agencies, such as USAID, intelligence community, national counter terrorism community, other departments and agencies functioning worldwide. This framework introduces two indicators to measure success; 1) measures of performance, 2) measures of effectiveness (The White House, [2010](#)).

In case of Pakistan, the evaluation and implementation of national security takes place at highest level and is handled by the National Security Council. After taking over power, the former President Gen. Pervaiz Musharraf constituted the National Security Council in 1999 which was later reconstituted under the National Security Council Act, 2001. Furthermore, it was consolidated through National Security Council Act, 2004. The President was its Chairman with Prime Minister as Vice Chairman to oversee and do consultation over the matters of sovereignty, integrity, defense, and security (The Pakistan Code, [2004](#)). The democratic transition in 2008 led to the reconstitution of cabinet committee on national security; Defense Committee of Cabinet. This committee remained functional for five years (2008-2013), however, it overall held only 12 meetings in 5 years with no secretariat and no support. When Pakistan Muslim League (N) formed government in 2013 it reconstituted Cabinet Committee on National Security. Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif was its chairman and the members included Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Defense, Minister of Interior, Minister of Finance,

Chairman of Joint Chief Staff, Chiefs of Army, Air Force, and Navy. Therefore, it was transformed to National Security Committee (NSC) with the fundamental role of decision-making on issues of national security with a supporting new division; National Security Division. The NSC held 23 meetings from the time period 2013-2018. Out of these 23 meetings, 9 were held under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and 14 were held under the Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi. During this time period, direct meetings were held between the Prime Minister and Chief of Army Staff 119 times, out of which 29 were held one-on-one. These direct consultations overridden the role of NSC and undermined the purported communication among all members. These meetings did not involve even the National Security Advisors (NSAs) (Initially Sartaj Aziz and later Lt. Gen. Nasser Khan Janjua)¹. The implementation of NSP requires robust role of NSC with plausible empowered mandate. The COVID-19 pandemic taught a myriad of lessons, however, it was also a success story of crisis handling in Pakistan. The platform of National Command and Operations Center (NCOC) created a unique opportunity to usher into a thorough communication and execution environment. Though, it catered to the requirements of global emergency and deep national crisis yet the structure of NCOC can be a guiding framework for strategic communication and implementation of NSP.

Conclusion

The diplomacy, public relations, trade connectivity, and state relations developed as sources of communication for international connection over millennia. The state-to-state and people-to-people relationships evolved out of this which were augmented and complemented by the role of media. Since ages, propaganda has been an important tool of maligning the enemy and countering the enemies' rhetoric. The connotation and conceptualization of security and national security, in particular, have evolved and outgrown the traditional perspective implicating multi levels and a myriad of spectrum. Pakistan has been facing a wide range of security challenges which are multiplying with immense geopolitical and geo-economic shifts at global and regional levels. Corresponding to the global dynamics, Pakistan has set geo-economics as its fundamental strategic and foreign relations dimension. NSP in 2022. The state structure needs

¹ "Performance of National Security Committee (2013-2018)", *PILDAT*, (Islamabad, 2019), 3-6

supplementary forces to bring about change in the environment and attitudes in order to usher into the scenario of adequate involvements by parties. Twenty first (21st) century is the era of strategic communication, blowing a new life into the traditional ways of diplomacy, public relations management, trans-national communication, networking and influencing the target audience. Moreover, it is a well-balanced blend of verbal messages, actions, deeds, modes of diplomacy, and public relations. It is not only serving as a bridge between various engaging parties, rather as a catalyst as well to transform the environment bringing about the desired outcomes. Strategic communication in the United States has out modeled the conventional communication channels to implement the NSPs. A comprehensive strategic communication framework is recommended for the implementation of NSP (2022-2026) as Pakistan is intensely in need of dealing with a gamut of social, political, economic, and foreign relations problems.

Conflict of Interest

The authors of the manuscript have no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

Data availability is not applicable as no new data was created.

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