

National Security Strategy of Iran and North Korea

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Abstract

In the contemporary phase of international politics, national security strategy (NSC) is considered as a primary factor in the process of state-crafting. It addresses the key concerns; such as domestic, regional and global threats. It also focuses on the policy framework for the security of the state. In this age of uncertain geo-political environment, every nation-state has adopted a particular strategy in a certain strategic environment to minimize their strategic threats. Thus, the NSC is very important for enhancing the national security of the state. It also very helpful in maintaining the regional and global strategic balance. Contemporary formation of nation-state has defined some certain parameters for the formation of national security. These parameters are very important for achieving several particular objectives such as global strategic stability, regional hegemony and the survival of the political regime in the domestic political domain. The development of NSC has become more complex in the modern politico-strategic than the past ages. This research article finds the parameters of national security strategy which have been adopted by Iran and North Korea to maintain the strategic balance in the regional and global arena. The article concludes that Iran and North Korea must find an independent decision-making syndrome to accelerate the process of national security in the existing strategic domain.

Keywords: National Security Strategy, Iran, North Korea, 5th generation war, strategic balance

Introduction

National security is a general concept which has been by many states used in the strategic domain. It defines that the state will protect the interest of its citizens in every domain i.e., in a national, regional and international environment through their political institutions. This concept was used and is still used by a group of political and media persons. In the security studies, the concept is seemed conservative in nature, domestic in principles and narrow in terms of political motives. Despite provocations, contemporary period is termed as the “*era of strategic insecurity*” where the role of the state has expanded. Thus the concept of national security is also needed to be more specified in nature, clear in its utility and effective in its definition. The NSS is more effective in its nature in security studies. Although the term is reliably used by the policymakers and a group of researchers, the term is needed to be expanded clearly in the strategic culture of the state to expand its importance both strategically and politically. The NSS defines the process of calculating the challenges and opportunities in every domain of the state and diversion of the existing state

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policies to obtain maximum national interests. The term NSS seems clear in its meanings, efficient in nature and effective in the security studies.

The NSS of Iran and North Korea are not officially declared by the state leadership or any institution of the state. However, strategic culture in the regional and international domain, political and diplomatic statements by the leadership, media briefings, intentions of state institutions and their leadership and last but not least are the reports by many international agencies and institutions; are few components which may be used to analyze the NSS of the two states. This article is an attempt to introduce meaningful literature to explore the NSS of Iran and North Korea. The article not only explores the national security strategy of both states but also develop a path for a new research paradigm for the researchers in the domain of security studies. The political leadership of Iran and North Korea may use this article to frame their official NSS for the international forums and organizations, the international community and for its national institutions as well. The article identifies a strategic culture where NSS of the two states is based. It further highlights the process of NSS and additionally establishes the principles which seem very important while establishing NSS for Iran and North Korea in an institutional way. The article concludes that crafting of NSS is very important for every state in general and for Iran and North Korea in particular to produce their political performance and key role in international institutions, regional diplomacy and protection of the citizens in the local domain.

The Security Dilemma

The security dilemma is an intentionally perceived threat by a state to its territorial integrity, economic prosperity and regional strategic culture. Collin, a well-known researcher and analyst of security studies; has described that the security dilemma emerges when a status quo friendly state adopts aggressive policies against its neighboring states (Collins, 2000). This description for security seems narrow as the writer used a single way prism i.e., the state's own aggressive behavior is responsible for this dilemma. The writer has ignored the external pressure and the strategic culture of the neighboring states for defining the concept. The security analysts and experts of international relations are agreed that the state is a primary agent in defining the security dilemma to proceed for its NSS. However, they did not explore any concrete condition that how a state will identify this dilemma. Nationalist school of thought considered state as a fundamental and approachable institution for defining NSS. Security dilemma is a feeling of insecurity by a state which it feels intentionally. The state tries to produce concrete steps to cope with the condition of insecurity. The political administration of the state struggles to provide peaceful environment to its citizens (Herz, 1950). This explanation is seemed more clear and efficient as this defines that a state intentionally feels insecurity due to some certain features such as; strategic instability, political issues, economic challenges, diplomatic uncertainty, global pressure, and security threats, etc. It may be argued that security dilemma is not

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a status quo and permanent feature of the state and can be whitewashed or at least minimized by adopting a meaningful NSS.

National Security Strategy (NSS)

The National Security Strategy (NSS) is a term used in security studies in the contemporary era. It is associated with the state narration to accelerate a peaceful environment for the citizens in every domain. It defines the symmetric and asymmetric policies of the state related to the security and defense of the state. It also fosters the strategic sense of the state and mobilizes the political machinery to secure national interests. In the contemporary era; only states have legal authority to define the term “security threat” and defines the NSS accordingly (Fjader, 2014). It is a well-defined document which includes the national interests, challenges to national security and the opportunities to cope with socio-political and strategic challenges.

How a state defines NSS? What are the implications of NSS? The questions seem very complex. The notion of NSS varies from state to state. Every state has its own dimension of threats, intentions of strategic dialogue and policy narration. There are some specific states which have defined the process of NSS in the official documents. Among these states; United States of America (USA), Britain, Canada, Germany, France Russia, and Georgia are included. The US national security document states that; deterring all kind of threats and aggression is a primary objective of the United States NSS (US State Department, 2007). The British NSS document portrays the use of all means for the prosperity of the nation and the protection of state citizens from external aggression are an integral part of national security (Government of Britain, 2010). MacFardane argues that the Georgian NSS calculates the threats then analyze the opportunities and finally codify the national security policy (MacFardane, 2012). The remaining states have also similar NSS priorities. All these explanations describe that protection of the national interests is a primary concern for the states. In the contemporary period, states are guided by national interests. They also have the political power of resistance and the energy to cope with the challenges. All these national interests, challenges, and opportunities are actually considered as a significant part of the NSS. A nation-state formally or informally, sometimes orally and sometimes through official documents present the NSS, so that the international community may well aware about the NSS of that particular state. This kind of state may be termed as “*state having declared NSS*”. However, there are many nation-states which have neither a declared NSS nor have tried to portray a formal NSS to the international community. These states may be termed as “*states with undeclared NSS*”. Among these states, Iran and North Korea are considered two important states. The NSS of these two states is still undeclared and the international community has concerns that both of these states may have anarchic intentions in the international political regime that may disturb international peace and stability. The agents of NSS of Iran and North briefly analyzed as follows:

Iran's National Security Dilemma

Iran is an Islamic state located in the Middle East. It is one of the major oil producing country of the Persian Gulf. Iran shares its territorial borders with Pakistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Afghanistan, and Turkmenistan. However, Saudi Arabia and Israel are the two most important actors in the Middle East which are considered as the competitor of Iran. The state has a central location in Eurasia and West Asia while its proximity with the Strait of Hormuz has further enhanced its geo-strategic importance. The strategic culture in the Middle East is an assortment of politico-military gravity and pressure from the USA foments the Iranian leadership for national security arrangements as Tehran perceives strategic threat from Washington (Ellis & Futter. n.d). Middle East in common and the Persian Gulf in particular inherently is an engine for socio-economic development for the western world. The USA which has deep strategic partnership with the Saudi Arabia and Israel wants a hegemonic design for the region. Iran is an important political actor. It is a key state in the Persian Gulf. Its strategic interests retaliate the strategic and economic interests of the USA, Saudi Arabia, and Israel. Therefore, Iran has critical intentions that these three actors are disturbing the strategic culture of the Persian Gulf in general and of Iran in particular. Tehran perceives USA, Israel and Saudi Arabia as the strategic dilemma for its security in the Middle East scenario (Kraig, 2006). There exists some important political agents in the strategic environment of the Middle East. A brief description of these political agents is given as following;

i) United States of America

The USA is a key security threat for Iran. The USA is dominating the strategic culture of Persian Gulf since 1950s with the help of its local allies. The Washington has created a local hegemony with a significant support from Israel and the Saudi Arabia. Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 increased the role of the USA as a retaliatory force for maintaining strategic balance in the Middle East. The Gulf monarchic regimes signed strategic agreements with the USA (Kraig, 2006). The existence of the US forces in the Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz are categorically condemned by Tehran at various occasions. The Iranian leadership terms this presence as an extension of US strategic imperial makeshift in the region.

ii) Israel

Israel is an undeclared nuclear state in the Middle East. The Jerusalem has altered the regional strategic balance of the Middle East. The state is also an ally of the USA which poses a threat to the Iranian political regime. The state has conventional and unconventional security means and Iran perceives socio-economic and security threats from Israel (Jeganaathan, 2012). Middle East is a volatile region as it has oil and gas and other natural reserves. The region also enroots all the natural reserves to the western states. Israel is a major opponent of Iranian policies so Tehran perceives Israel as a security dilemma in the Middle East regional strategic scenario.

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iii) Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is one of the founding members of G-20 and is an ally of the USA in the Middle Eastern strategic scenario. The state also has a strong political influence in the Middle East. So, all the political monarchs in the Gulf region secure and protect the strategic interests of Riyadh. The Saudis are political opponent of Tehran and the Iranian leadership considers the Arabs as a volatile challenge to the survival of their political regime. Iran's diplomatic and political relations with the Arab world also remain very limited. Still, Iran counters the Saudi policies in the Gulf region and considers the Arab regime as her political and strategic competitor.

Iran's National Security Objectives

The economy of Iran is dependent upon oil and gas. Major economic partners of Iran are Russia, China, Germany, and Canada. Strategic and economic balance of the Middle East in broader and Gulf region, in particular, is in favor of the USA, Israel, and Saudi Arabia. In this scenario, Iran is coping with strategic challenges and enhancing its role in the Middle East. Although the regional balance is not in Iran's favor, still Iran wants to increase its influence in the region. In accordance with the given context, national security objectives of Iran are described as following;

i) Regional Hegemony

Saudi Arabia and Israel are the strategic allies of the USA. Both states individually and fomenting strategic triad with the USA has had developed a strategic hegemony in the Middle East. In this challenging strategic culture, Iranian leadership strongly believes in exercising an aggressive policy against all these three regional competitors to secure its particular role in the region. Iran has strong influence on the Strait of Hormuz. By accelerating the military power, Iran wants to create regional hegemony in the Gulf region (Nielsen, 2015).

ii) Enhancing National Security

Strategically, Gulf region is under the influence of the USA as Washington has bilateral security agreements with all the Middle East monarchies. The Washington sells conventional arsenals worth of billion US dollars to the Middle East region. Saudi Arabia is the largest buyer of US conventional arsenals. The USA has also secured agreements with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) (Kraig, 2011). Iran considers all these agreements as one of the primary threat to its strategic position in the region. Therefore, Tehran is enhancing its security by arranging alternative strategic options.

iii) Regime Survival

Iranian leadership executes harsh diplomacy in its relations with the USA. Iran considers the USA as a strategic imperialist in the Gulf region. The state perceives that US security agreements with the GCC states are nothing but to destabilize the

political regime of Iran. To strengthen her political system, the Iranian leadership is playing a vital role. Thus regime survival is an integral part of the national security objective of Iran.

Iran's National Security Measures

For enhancing the national security, Iran has taken multiple measures so that the balance of power in the Middle East may tilt in her favor. These measures may be described in three main approaches which are analyzed as following;

i) Conventional Approach

Iran considers herself a leader of revolutionary Islam. The Iranian leadership wants to promote its strategic influence in the Muslim world in general and specifically in the Middle East. For this objective, Tehran establishes a revolutionary military corps so that the strategic efficacy be maintained in the Middle East. Its conventional military force is divided into the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the regular military. The primary objective of IRGC in the post-revolutionary period was to maintain the external security, internal defense and to work for the regime's survival. The IRGC has a supremacy over the entire defense system of the state. Furthermore, IRGC is also associated with the unconventional means of the state defense system. Militarily, Iran is spending the largest amount of her state budget on conventional defense system to equip her military with state of the art arsenals. Iran also wants to establish a conventional military hierarchy in the Middle East by expanding its strategic role in the Gulf region (Eisenstadt, 2015).

ii) Unconventional Approach

Missile technology is the unconventional component in the security policy of Iran. This system is also important for strategic proxies like Hezbollah and Hamas in the Middle East. Iran possesses the largest number of missiles in the Middle East. It has thousands of short, medium and long-range missiles and also possibly has land-attack cruise missiles. Iran opts first strike capability to secure the offensive position so that exemplary threat is maintained against the enemy from the very beginning. The missiles are the part of Iran's resistance doctrine which focuses on the demoralization of the enemy through strike capability (Eisenstadt, 2017).

iii) Contemporary Approach

From the very beginning, Tehran is secretive about her nuclear program. There is significant information regarding her uranium enrichment facilities from 2003 to 2011. Furthermore, the media briefings and statements by the political and strategic leadership of Iran also verify that Tehran was secretively determining the capability for developing nuclear technology for strategic objectives. The Tehran-Washington nuclear deal signed in 2015 halted the program but that agreement proves short-lived. Since 2017, there is still ambiguity about a hibernating Iran's nuclear program. From the previous nuclear deals between Tehran and Washington, it may be analyzed that

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Iran did not and hence would not abandon its nuclear program unless a fair deal is concluded which would communicate and fulfill the economic narratives of the state.

North Korea's National Security Dilemma

The official name of the state is Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). North Korea is located in East Asia. The state shares its territorial boundary with China, Russia, and South Korea. Pyongyang is the capital of the state. The political leadership officially claims North Korea as a self-reliant socialist state. The state is ruled by a family monarchy with politically under the influence of the Korean Workers Party (KWP). The strategic culture of East Asia had been a permanent source of pressure upon North Korea's leadership as the region is under the military influence of the USA. The state is under the permanent fear of aggression from the US forces. To cope with this primary challenge, the state adopted *Songun* i.e., military-first policy since the 1950s (Hodge, 2003).

North Korea is bifurcated from South Korea and both were previously part of the Korean Peninsula. The strategic culture of East Asia is not in favor of North Korea. South Korea and Japan, two of the important states of East Asia have security agreements with the USA. The Washington administration also provides a nuclear security shield to these states. Neighboring China has its own strongest NSS. North Korea has no security guarantee or any formal agreement with any nation in the world. It also has no nuclear ally from any of the regions which may protect her at the time of external aggression. In this situation, a strategic security dilemma is raised for North Korea. The states like the USA, South Korea, and Japan are the primary part of this security dilemma for North Korea.

i) United States of America

North Korea considers the USA as an imperialist state in East Asia. Since 1950s, strategic equilibrium of the region is upset by the US forces. The North Korean leadership perceives that half of the part of Korea (South Korea) is under the influence of imperialist force and we have to strive our conventional and unconventional forces and diplomacy to liberate this region from the US imperial force (Hodge, 2003). Furthermore, the diplomacy of North Korea stresses the need for strategic balancing so that the people of the region may have a free interaction.

ii) South Korea

North Korea and South Korea were parted from each other during the cold war. South Korea became an ally with the USA while North Korea struggled for the national security at least in an independent way having formal support from China and former USSR. North Korea officially claims that South Korea is an integral part of its territory and vice versa. However, the North Korean political leadership foments that the other part is an ally of an imperial power. The North Korean leadership wants to liberate this part through military intervention but South Korea has a security

agreement with the USA. So, Seoul is a permanent source of national security dilemma for North Korea (Wertz, 2017).

iii) Japan

Japan is another ally of the USA and is considered by Pyongyang as a strategic threat to its security. During the early 20th century, Japan took the imperial sword to capture the Korean Peninsula but failed to do the same. Japan is termed as a regional strategic challenge for North Korea. Since 1950s, Japan has proactive pacifism against North Korea (Ploetzing, 2015). Furthermore, the North Korean leadership has permanent strategic fear from Japan and utilizing this fear as an instrument of her national security policy. Japan is ranked in the end in the security dilemma profile of Pyongyang, but strategically moves to the top in terms of rivalry.

North Korea's National Security Objectives

The leadership of North Korea termed Korean peninsula under the siege of US imperialism (Hodge, 2003). The indications from the several sources show that North Korea is preparing well to secure the strategic balance in East Asia despite vulnerable economic conditions. In accordance with the given context, the major national security objectives of North Korea are explained as follows;

i) Regional Hegemony

Despite the regional strategic threats from the USA, South Korea, and Japan which are the agents of the strategic troika in East Asia, Pyongyang still wants to secure her regional hegemony in terms of national security affairs. North Korea is termed as the fourth highest military power after the USA, China, and Russia with regard to the induction of the population in conventional military. The military institution is equipped with modern strategic needs. Due to the hegemonic ambitions; Japan and South Korea feel threats from North Korea in the conventional as well as in contemporary nuclear confrontation. North Korea wants to maintain this status quo for an infinite time frame so that her strategic fear can be accelerated in East Asia.

ii) Enhancing National Security

The second objective of North Korea is to enhance the national security so that the upcoming threats, issues of national security and the strategic challenges may be minimized. To propagate this objective, the North Korean leadership has established modern strategic techniques in the field of military strategy and has enhanced the policy of *Songunin* the national regime.

iii) Regime Survival

The political system of North Korea is controlled by dynastic leadership. This leadership has a primary role in the process of state-crafting as well as nation-building in North Korea. The ultimate objective of the NSS is to maintain such policies that may help in strengthening the position of the existing political dynasty. For this

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objective, strong NSS is very important. The NSS objective of the state also maintains this regime.

North Korea's National Security Measures

North Korea has taken strong measures to strive the national security in an appropriate way. These measures are categorized into three main approaches. These approaches are analyzed as following;

i) Conventional Approach

In the conventional approach, North Korea still maintained one of the largest modern military power in the world. *Songun* is the primary strategy of the state. This approach concentrates upon the development of military and military means according to the modern means of technology. The military is equipped with conventional means of warfare and can cope with the challenges in the security paradigm. North Korea has developed its own defense industry to curtail the conventional arsenal needs of the state military. The state has conventional superiority in East Asia (Jackson, 2015).

ii) Unconventional Approach

In the unconventional security measures, North Korea has built its own short-range, long-range and inter-continental ballistic missiles. The state has also its own missile delivery capabilities as well as submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM). The security experts propound that the state has the strategic capability to counter the limited war.

iii) Contemporary approach

The contemporary approach stressed the use of nuclear technology for strategic objectives. North Korea has developed its own strategic nuclear posture. A former signatory of Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), North Korea detonated its nuclear weapons in 2006, 2009, 2013, and 2016. The experts of nuclear technology believe that North Korea has assured retaliation policy to fight for its strategic objectives in East Asia. The state has developed tactical nuclear weapons and nuclear-armed artillery (Jackson, 2015).

The Fifth Generation Warfare and the NSS of Iran and North Korea

The Fifth Generation Warfare (5th GW) is a phenomenon where non-state actors fight with the state without or having any political and ideological motives. This phenomenon is an interesting development in the present culture of national security anarchy. The vortex of violence in the 5th GW has destabilized the peace and stability of the world in general and of the Middle East and East Asia in particular. The 5th GW is an offshoot of economic deprivation, poverty, lawlessness and furthermore national security vulnerability. With regard to the role 5th GW in the national security culture of Iran and North Korea, the role of robotics surgical strikes, robotic oriented approach in the arsenal technology for surveillance and snipping, the drone strikes,

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cyber-attacks and the data security skipping is very important to understand. The USA is striving the 5th GW approaches to destabilize the national security culture of the Middle East and East Asia. Iran and North must understand this narrative and steps be adapted to respond to this narrative. An alternative *super technology* is very important for Iran and North Korea alongside the conventional forces, missiles tactics and nuclear arsenals to cope with the challenges of 5th GW.

Conclusion

National security objectives of Iran and North Korea are strategically driven and are US-centric. The imperial tendencies from the USA are defining the NSS motives of the two states while the national security approach of the two states is also very narrow in its nature. The national security objectives of the two states are ambitious regional hegemony, maintenance of national security and the survival of the political regime. The means of the national security of both states are enhancing conventional forces, unconventional strategy and approaching the nuclear technology for strategic objectives. The parameters of national security strategy which have been adopted by Iran and North Korea to maintain the strategic balance in the regional and global arena are needed to be expanded by accelerating the additional means of super technology. Both Iran and North Korea must find an independent decision-making syndrome to accelerate the process of national security in the existing strategic domain.

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