Public Health as a Neglected Field of Security in Pakistan: Future Prospects

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Article Info	Abstract
	Public health remainsa neglected branch of security studies, especially in Pakistan. The article analyzes the theory of securitization to determine the significance of public health in the context of Post COVID-19 scenario. Beginning from the Copenhagen School of thought debate towards critical security studies, the article will study the consequences of the COVID 19 global pandemic on Pakistan and its relevance to biosecurity challenges.The situation even worsened in the post-COVID-19 scenario and the public health, as a science of refiningand as a means of guardinghealth, needs promotion of a healthylifestyle to decrease the vulnerabilityof the humanbody against diseases. The deliberation will be made to study the non-traditional dimension of security and explore options for improvement. The debate in this article concludes that despite having economic anomalies, Pakistan needs to face the challenge of COVID-19 vigorously. Keeping in mind the available and possible resources, Pakistan has to defend its health sector persistently and strive hard to mitigate the perceived threat of the coronavirus. The research focuses on the analogy of non-traditional security concerns, emphasizing the public health sector. Hence, the article will recommend adopting constructive strategies for sustainable development.

Introduction

Security has always remained one of the significant aspects of humanity. It is an instinct for every human to stay safe and secure. However, the concept of security is considered derivative and linked with traditional and non-traditional facets (Hsiung, 2004). The state-centric approach dominates traditional security. In contrast, non-traditional security is prominently individual-centric, focusing on environmental degradation, hunger, repression, the public sector, etc.

The debate on security covers both traditional and non-traditional paradigms; therefore,it is needed to resolve the threats coming from both paradigms. Unfortunately, South Asia has generally addressed traditional paradigms more exclusively in the past; consequently, the non-traditional aspect has not been emphasized accordingly (Iqbal and Salman, 2020). Afterthe partition, Pakistan had to face several traditional security threats due to Indian rivalry in the region. Therefore, the discussion on conventional and nuclear capabilities of the South Asian states, i.e., India and Pakistan, remained the salient feature of the South Asian region. COVID-19 and its consequences shifted the debate towards the neglected security field, especially the non-traditional security threats. The non-traditional security paradigm includes environmental concerns, societal issues, the education sector, unemployment, and other economic aspects viz-a-viz public health domain. This research is maneuvering around the debate of *Public Health* improvements needed in Pakistan and how it will affect the discussion of security studies? As Pakistan has faced three waves of COVID-19 (maybe more to come), there is a need to formulate policies and strategies to address Pakistan's related public health challenges.

Although this pandemic has revolutionized the threat dimensions in public health,itis worth reflecting on its implications and recommendations stated in this article to improve the conditions. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, many scholars, practitioners, and academicians have writtenabout it, mentioning the damage cost and profoundly changing political discourse of world politics. But this study discusses Pakistan as a case study to explore the options, keeping in mind the national security approach. The pandemic is most likely to accelerate Pakistan's pre-existing destitute public health sector; therefore, the argument states the need to reshape the existing public health policy radically. In the Cold War scenario, when security studies emerged as a separate and significant field of study, it was the time when the debate on traditional and non-traditional security threats evolved. In the contemporary era, traditionalists have been overtaken wide. Human rights, poverty, and health are also considered security threats, including acts of terrorism, nuclear war, and other state-centric issues. Interestingly, the Copenhagen school of thought has maximized the security sectors, including pandemics, hunger, food security, climate change, etc. These are commonly considered non-traditional security threats.

The research focuses on the non-traditional security paradigm, emphasizing the public health sector. The first section of the paper deals with the theoretical construct of the debate onthe non-traditional security paradigm regarding public health and how COVID 19 has significantly instigated this debate. The following section will emphasizethe case study of Pakistan and how this non-traditional security paradigm has been neglected in the security policy of Pakistan. Finally, the last quarter of the paper suggests a way forward for Pakistan to deal with the challenges posed by the COVID-19 virus.

The Elucidation of Security and Public Health

Security has remained one of the crucial areas for academicians/ theorists and policymakers. Traditional security deals with the hard-core military and political issues the nation-state faces. It is more focused on building more arms and ammunition to deter the enemy attack. When the traditional security approach was criticized, Barry Buzan identified the five essential security sectors under the securitization theory, i.e., military, political, economic, environmental, and societal. (Barry Buzan: 2008). Therefore, the security concept was broadened as these were not part of the traditional security agenda. Yet they raised cautions that were similar in many ways to traditional security issues.

Nonetheless, the lack of conceptual framework affected the implementation of coherent security policy. Interestingly, these comprehensions of security remained contested in the scholarly debate. The societal division of security deals with many psychological viz-a-viz physical issues related to security which can be addressed on both the security paradigms, i.e., traditional and non-traditional. The analogy addressed here reflects Maslow's famous model known as the hierarchy of needs. (McGuire, 2012) The model named *hierarchy of needs* covers five categories of human needs:physiological needs, safety needs, love, and belonging needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. These physiological needs include health conditions as well.

Moreover, these concepts are reaffirmed in the Copenhagen school of thought (Stritzel, 2014:.27) while considering the societal needs as it states: "…social construction as operating within certain limits produced by *sedimented* structures, and this concept is applied to society as well as to the state" (Sheehan, 2005: 87). Therefore, while articulating the policy, the policymakers need to have a conceptual clarity of the needs of the individuals for whom the policy is being formulated. Furthermore, Robert Cox and Welsh's school of thought debating the significance of Critical Security Studies (Peoples and Williams, 2014) advocates the concept of human emancipation, which deals with the idea of *freeing the people*. This concept states about the fulfillment of all the requirements of the people so that they consider themselves happy and free from insecurity. Nonetheless, it is the task of the government that it should provide for the basic needs of an individual. Therefore, better health facilities and systems are considered an individual's fundamental right.

There are significant gaps between the security community and public health administrators, especially regarding security building. In the era of COVID-19, security was thought to be dominated by non-traditional security thinking, and dominant technocratic discourse of public health strategic policy-making also emerged. This body of thought aimed to maintain the security debate and its shift towards the social order related to health. Mc Sweeney considers society as an identity and states that "…identity is not a fact of society, it is a process of negotiation among people and interest groups (Mc Sweeney, 1999:73) Yet, Ole Waever and Barry Buzan are of the view that human security is one the significant aspect in the field of security. (Waever and Buzan, 2015: 93)

Therefore, the academic contributors to the field of security and like-minded proposed that the concept of security needs to broaden in two different directions. First, the notions of security should include other security sectors andthe military. Instead, it should have a comprehensive approach that could be applied to the military realm and the social, political, environmental, and economic realm. Secondly, the referent object of security should not be limited to the state as traditional security denotes it. Instead, it should embrace individuals with the international system above it.

Health is considered the subject of immense significance, especially after the COVID-19 crisis. This crisis initiated the debate on adopting proper and sufficient public health management within a state and internationally. The world is currently one unit due to globalization. Therefore, every major crisis can be internationalized. COVID-19 is also a crisis that can be dealt with on both levels, i.e., national and international levels. The paper here focuses on the national domain. The primary role of the government is to protect the lives of its vulnerable citizens during disease pandemics by reducing their exposure to risk through preparedness and capacity building of their staff. The pandemic of COVID-19 has enhanced the health-related risk and other infectious diseases due to several factors and barriers, such as lack or inadequate access to helpful information

on prevention, limitations in or exclusions from accessing diagnostic and treatment services, cramped and crowded living and working conditions,stigma and discrimination and other factors. In coordination and partnership with relevant actors at global, regional, and national levels, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) contributes to enhancing the preparedness of prioritized points of entry and exit to preventthe further spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) infection.

On the other hand, the discussion on biological weaponry is also more dangerous than any nuclear or conventional capacity, for damage is enormous. Atomicweapons and conventional weaponshave physical visibility, yet biological agents such as viruses, toxins, etc., are invisible weapons with far more destructive abilities than visible weapons. These natural weapons may be in the form of powder-like bacterium Anthrax, which created hype after the 9/11 episode. It was historically introduced:

> Anthrax was mass-produced as a weapon reserve during World War II but never deployed. Anthrax is infectious but not contagious. It is used to kill a specific group. Another biological weapon in history was smallpox-infected blankets distributed to Native Americans by the British Army in the 18th century during the conflict between the UK and French colonists. Then in 1972, the UN banned biological weapons, and they have never been deployed in modern warfare. (Siti. Napa and Rohman, 2020).

But in the recent era, we can witness the comebackof these agents in the form of Dengue, Bird flu, and others. Moreover, viruses like Ambula or Ebola can spread quickly into the target population. Whereas penetrators of the disease may take the leverage by creating vaccines to provide immunity totheir people. (The History of Vaccines, 2018). Therefore, considering the above-discussed mandate, it is essential to formulate a comprehensive and detailed public health policy.

Conceptual Debate of Bio Security

John Lock's social contract is the concept thatviews the state as individual-centric who makes it. Therefore, he argues that the foundation of the state's security is based on the individual. (Locke, 2016). Interestingly, this concept of security has evolved in the past few decades.

> Lessons were derived from Word War I (1914-18) and World War II (1939-45), but what were the lessons from the threat which affected a quarter of the world's population and caused the death of about 50 million in 1919. Unfortunately, not much was derived from the Spanish flu;somewhat, it was forgotten in the annals of history (Shafi, Meo, and Khalid, 2020).

In 2019, the COVID-19 virus struck the worldto the globalized world structure. The virus proliferated internationally. The world got worriedabout the issue of bioterrorism. Although it was taken as a conspiracytheory, this invisible weapon remained the cause of insecurity, and the academic debate started weaving in both ways. Thus, there is a need for policymakers to work in this direction. The strategic usage of biological weapons has presented difficulties and increased the challenges in the public health sector regarding the segregation of intentional and unintentional practices. (Galamas, 2008). This probability is quite vague in this context as the analysis of identity politics within the social security model is a blur, likewise the nature of the relationship between the society and the public health. The public health sector is working on diagnosing the diseases and containment viz-a-viz cure of the conditions. Yet, it still needs to be designed to identify whether the disease was created artificially or is naturally originated.

Nonetheless, this kind of weapon is very tricky to use, as it requires scientific expertise and complex procedure to inject the specific biological agent into the society or state. However, its future possibilities cannot be ignored. This debate has gained value, especially after the COVID-19 scenario and warned the world regarding its catastrophic consequences. In this case, the suspect may remain unknown,whilemany lives have been lost by the injected and planted virus. Nevertheless, bio-security is one of the emerging debates even in the health sector, which is a concrete reality.

What is COVID-19?

Coronavirus (commonly known as COVID-19) causes respiratory disorders due to a virus called SARS-CoV-2. This infectious disease causes shortness of breath, fever, and cough symptoms. Although scientistshave introducedseveralvaccines against the disease,the validation of these vaccines needs to be monitored.

Understanding how the Virus spreads evolve with time as the research progresses. The virus is thought to spread mainly from person to person:
- Between people in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- Respiratory droplets are produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks.

Recent studies indicate that people can spread the virus before they develop symptoms (pre-symptomatic) or who never develop symptoms (asymptomatic). It may also be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object with the virus and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes. However, this is not the primary way the virus spreads. In addition, older adults and people of any age who have severe underlying medical conditions may be at higher risk for more severe complications from COVID-19.

COVID-19 is highly transmissible and can be spread by people who do not know they have the disease. This piece discusses the goals, guiding principles, and strategies Pakistan can use to mitigate and prevent COVID-19 transmission in order to address public health issues that focus on individual-level analysis.However, if broad-scale testing is widely implemented, or we have a more comprehensive and precise measure of disease burden, authorities should take specific measures.

    a. Preparedness, readiness, and infection prevention and control (IPC)
    b. WHO advises on necessary precautions and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
    c. Standard precautions, transmission-based precautions & COVID-19 specific recommendations

Public Health in Pakistan

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought immense damage to health security globally. Initially, numerous states had locked down to counter the spread of the disease. The world's economy faced significant disruption and a supply chain slowdown. The pandemic hadeconomic, diplomatic, and societal implications, but the infectious virus's necessary consequence was in the health sector. The health policies of the world came under threat. Most of the procedures were identified as a failure. The European and American public health sectors were known to be more advanced and adequate to fulfill the needs of their population. But the COVID-19 pandemic tested and disapproved all these hypotheses

This virus hit Pakistan's neighbors, i.e., Iran and China, and eventually Pakistan due to its proximity to both the states. The people to people relationship and economic interdependence of these states with Pakistan made the state face the imported infections manifolds. Pakistan reported its first confirmed case of COVID-19 on February 26, 2020; it confronted numerous issues and eventually reported deaths due to this lethal virus. According to the current reports released by the World Health Organization (WHO), Pakistan, from January 2020 to July 2021, confirmed 957,371 cases and 22,281 deaths. (Pakistan: WHO Coronavirus Disease) (Dawn: 2020). Although Pakistan's mortality rate was not as high as its eastern neighbor India, Pakistan needs immediate improvements in the state's health sector to counter the challenge of COVID-19. After the COVID - 19 virus outbreak, its sub-variants like SAR-COV and BA-2 were identified. Yet a new variant was named as Omicron and increased exponentially in several countries. Pakistan also faced this variant, although reported infectious cases in Pakistan continued to decline, especially causalities and hospital admissions. The current reports mentioning the subject area state 17 diagnostic tests per 100,000 people on April 4 [2022] (COVID-19 Results Briefing Pakistan: April 7, 2022).

Pakistan tookseveral steps to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The Federal Minister formulated the National Command and Operation Center for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives. The smart lockdown also remained one of the essential techniques to contain this virus and deal with the economic crisis of complete lockdown. Yet the disharmony between the provincial and federal governments was political rather thanadministrative. Thus this lack of consensus affected the implementation of the decision—this disharmony in the public health sector of Pakistan. The Government has started vaccinations for public COVID-19, yet the process is relatively slow.
Additionally, vaccination is not mandatory for the public, and this policy needs to be reconsidered. There are different vaccines introduced in Pakistan; Sinopharm; the Chinese vaccine, AstraZeneca; British-Swedish vaccine, Pfizer; US vaccine and Sinovac; Chinese vaccine. Till July 5, 2021, approximately 17,076,023 vaccine doses have been administered. (Pakistan: WHO Coronavirus Disease). Pakistan's National Institute of Health, Islamabad, has recently introduced the PakVac vaccine, yet its testing and validation are under process. (National Institute of Health, 2021).

Policy Options for Pakistan

Unfortunately,the public health sector is a neglected security field in Pakistan. While articulating the National Security Policy (NSP) in 2014 focused on non-state actors or radicalization with almost no focus on the public health sector (NSP: Ministry of Interior, 2014, Pakistan, 6). Even in the current National Security Policy of 2022, stress was on the economic issues and concerns, but the bio-security and public health sectors were ignored. (NSP: Ministry of Interior, 2022). Moreover, rural areas of Pakistan lack basic health facilities, and doctors and trained staff remain reluctant to go to these far-flung areas because of the lack of educational and other facilities for their families. Therefore, the paper's primary focus will be on prospects and policy options to fill this gap.

Conceptualizing Public Health as a part of National Security Policy (NSP)

The most crucial step would be to consider the public health sector as an essential part of NSP. The articulation of the policy, keeping in mind health as a non-traditional security issue, can be the most practical step towards the formulation of better health conditions. Furthermore, as discussed earlier, the concept of emancipation,videos are introduced as one of the significant steps for freeing people and providing them withbasic needs.

Role of Media in propagating the hand-hygiene

Hand hygiene indeed looks effortless and is a common-sense step, and yet, there was a need to make ordinary people understand its worth and importance. Therefore, media was used to propagate the significance of hand hygiene as WHO and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identified this as the most effective and cost-efficient means to stop the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. The media displayedseveral interesting and convincing adcampaigns to promote hand washing. Although Pakistan has used this tool for the required purpose, it needs to adopt more effective techniques to make people understand its worth.

While promoting reinforcing messages, the correct behavior is lacking in public, therefore, to teach the habit of hand hygiene toordinary people. In addition, the significance of hand sanitizers is also one of the critical aspects of COVID-19, as, before the outbreak of this virus, hand sanitizers were not considered to be among the essentialchecklistitems before moving out or traveling, etc.

Thus, we cannot ignore the need to provide reinforcing messages, to increase awareness and promote the correct behavior, for instance, by periodically relaying public messages reminding the public of the importance of washing their hands; having security guards remind people in malls, shopping areas, schools, offices and lastly by providing educational brochures and posters.

Implementation of Disinfecting Operations and Cleaning Techniques

The techniques of cleaning and disinfecting the shopping areas, offices, schools, etc., are needed so disinfecting frequently touched surfaces as everything cannot go untouched. Hand-to-surface interactions are likely to remain for door knobs, handrails, trays, tables, etc. Therefore, it is necessary to identify where these may occur and adopt adequate protection. Most importantly,organizing awareness workshops, lectures, and seminars is significant. Scientists should provide sufficient information guidelines to avoid the spread of COVID-19. Self-cleaning solutions for security trays include nanotechnology and UV-light (Coronavirus disease (COVID-19: WHO).

Adopting Contactless Technologies
Limiting the public to avoid the means that cause the spread of thevirus is one of the options. It is essential to encourage people to use contactless technologies, i.e., shopping online, promoting online procedures for Government and private work such as banking, official government procedures, etc. Due to physical interactions, there are a variety of physical objects, such as elevator knobs, door knobs, touch displays, etc. Therefore, people's chances of getting infected accidentally or due to carelessness increases, as pathogens can be transferred through mouth, nose, or eyes. Hence, touch contamination means should be reduced by acquainting the people with contactless techniques, such as:
- making use of contactless hand sanitizer
- avoiding contact thermometers for health screening
- making online check-in mandatory
- replacing fingerprint biometric authentication with other means

Managing Indoor Activities of People

Whenever the Government is announcing a lockdown, people commonly switch to indoor activities such as family functions, relatives meetings, indoor meet-ups, etc. However, these environments are dangerous as the air is filled with unpleasant odors. Moreover, healthy contaminants can immediately discomfort most individuals, especially those with a weak immune system such as sick or older adults, who may get infected instantly in the closed, indoor, and sometimes suffocated environment potential measures include increasing air ventilation usage and increasing awareness indoor activities as much as possible.

Adopting Techniques for Bio-safety and security

With proper guidance and regular updates, relevant security staff would benefit from conducting a bio risk assessment. The NSP should consider biosafety as an essential aspect, and the team should be trained to counter the hazards of biological threats. The effectiveness of the chosen measures should be validated to avoid overly on the installation of expensive pieces of equipment whileignoring developing adequate procedures and training for staff on its use.

Future Prospects

There are specificpreventive measures that need to be placed government level as a new standard protocol to reduce the risk of COVID-19 disease. These can be achieved through:

- Conceptualizing the NSP with emphasis on the need of public health facilities as well as to counter the risk of biological threats
- Raising awareness amongst the stakeholders (staff and the general public) on COVID-19 and other infectious diseases and measures to prevent their transmission
- By encouraging the stakeholders to observe recommended processes for containing the pandemic
- By rapidly detecting and effectively responding to any COVID-19 case, thereby reducing spread, morbidity, and mortality
- By strengthening coordination and communication between public health staff and the articulators of security policy for appropriate measures to minimize the spread of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases

Conclusion

The pandemic is most likely to accelerate Pakistan's pre-existing destitute public health sector. Therefore, there is a need to reshape the existing public health policy of the state radically. In the Cold War scenario, when security studies emerged as a separate and significant field of study, it was the time when the debate between traditional and non-traditional security threats evolved. Remarkably, the Copenhagen school of thought has maximized the security sectors,covering the health security debate. As a result, these are commonly considered non-traditional security threats.

Health is the subject of immense significance, especially after the COVID-19 crisis. This crisis initiated the debate on adopting proper and sufficient public health management within a state and on an international level. The world is currently one unit due to globalization. Therefore, every major crisis can be internationalized. Therefore, COVID-19 is also a crisis that can be dealt with on both the national and international levels, i.e.,the national and international levels.

Besides, the COVID-19 scenario has also proved that biological weaponry is a concrete reality rather than only an assumption. The biological threat can be more dangerous than any nuclear, conventional threat. Nuclear and conventional have physical visibility, yet biological agents such as viruses, toxins, etc., are invisible weapons with far more destructive abilities than visible weapons.

The crucial role of the Government is to protect the lives of its vulnerable citizens during disease pandemics by reducing their exposure to risk through preparedness and capacity building of their staff. However, Pakistan's public health system needs reformulation, keeping in view the current challenges posed to health security. The pandemic of COVID-19 has enhanced the health-related risk and other infectious diseases due to several factors and barriers such as lack or inadequate access to helpful information on prevention; limitations in or exclusions from accessing diagnostic and treatment services; cramped and crowded living and working conditions; stigma and discrimination; and other factors. Lastly, the paper recommends conceptualizing the NSP with addition of health as an existential threat to national security. Furthermore, the study suggests some standard procedures and mechanisms that may help with the danger of COVID-19 more vigorously.

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