

ISSN No.: 2708-2946

PAKISTAN JOURNAL of TERRORISM RESEARCH

Vol. 2, Issue 1 Jan - June 2020



A NACTA JOURNAL

**Pakistan Journal of Terrorism
Research**

Message from National Coordinator

It gives me immense pleasure to introduce you all to the latest issue of NACTA's biannual journal, the "Pakistan Journal of Terrorism Research". Now formally in its second year of publication, the journal is steadily establishing its credibility and increasingly crafting a name and reputation for itself among policy makers, political analysts and academics. It is one step forward in our collective fight against the menace of terrorism in the society.

This particular edition of the journal is fascinating blend of theory and practice. Attracting contributions from rich, diverse and qualified sources, the journal seeks to both achieve the objectives and further the ambitions of the Pakistani state and its people as eloquently laid out in the NACTA Act 2013. With its stated pledge to counter extremism and terrorism through a consorted effort between various government and non-government organizations, the journal represents the epitome of effective policy formulation and active action plans by means of rigorous and meticulous research. It is my sincere hope that this edition, like its predecessor, will be useful and helpful for policy makers, practitioners and academics.

I want to thank and congratulate the Research and Development team and the Editorial Board for their tireless efforts in putting this journal together. I am confident that with such dedicated and committed efforts, the journal will continue to grow and flourish in the years to come.



Mehr Khaliq Dad Lak
National Coordinator, NACTA

Editor's Note

Since its successful launch in July 2019, NACTA is proud to present the second edition of the Pakistan Journal of Terrorism Research. Although the journal is still in its infancy, the initiative nevertheless has widely been acknowledged and commended in both policy and academic circles.

This warm reception has not only strengthened the commitment and resolve of our dedicated Research team, but is also attracting the attention of leading academics, journalists and policy makers. This edition of the journal is a product of collaboration between subject specialists, researchers, media analyst and practitioners.

Such a combined effort has allowed us to significantly improve and build on our past experiences and produce a journal that is uniquely rich and diverse. Comprising of six peer-reviewed articles, the journal offers a range of perspectives on the challenges posed by terrorism to Pakistan and beyond.

Muhammad Makki, an Assistant Professor at NUST pithily discusses Pakistan's internal security dynamics in light of the country's counter-terrorism and counter-extremism policy initiatives. Hakim Muhammad, a native of Waziristan and a recent graduate from Quaid-e-Azam University, utilizes Gramsci's theory of hegemony and counter-hegemony to explain the changing socio-political landscape in FATA. Rafi-ul-Shan et al. offer a contemporary and urgently needed analysis of the cyber security threat posed by terrorism to Pakistan and the world at large. Saif Ur Rehman, a media expert presently associated with NACTA, provides rich

analysis of the usage of social media and communication tools by Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan. Abdul Basit, a Research Fellow at Nanyang University Singapore, takes a two-pronged approach to assess in detail the performance and achievements of the National Action Plan. Lastly, Dayyab Gillani, a PhD in terrorism studies from St Andrews University takes on the definitional dilemma of terrorism and offers a much-needed critique on the academic disillusionment over the definitional pursuit of terrorism.

As this journal continues to grow and develop, with every edition it comes closer to realizing the ambitions of NACTA and takes a step forward in our collective national resolve to eradicate the menace of terrorism from the society.

Disclaimer

The views and opinion expressed in this publication are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policy of NACTA.

Patron in Chief

Mehr Khaliq Dad Lak, National Coordinator NACTA

Editorial Team

Asif Saifullah Paracha	Editor-in-Chief
Muhammad Ali Babakhel	Editor
Fida Muhammad Khan	Associate Editor
Syed Asghar Ali Shah	Associate Editor

Advisory Board

Mr. Tariq Pervez, Former National Coordinator, NACTA	Dr. Jamil Ahmad (Chitrali) Professor, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Peshawar
Dr. Arshi Saleem Hashmi Professor, Head of Department Peace and Conflict Studies, National Defence University, Islamabad	Dr. Manzoor Khan Afridi Associate Professor, Department of Politics and International Relations, International Islamic University, Islamabad
Dr. Muhammad Makki Assistant Professor, Centre of International Peace & Stability (CIPS), NUST, Islamabad	Dr. Dayyab Gillani Assistant Professor, Political Science Department, University of the Punjab, Lahore

Design and Layout

Ghulam Mujtaba

Muhammad Zia

Contents

i. Can Terrorism be Defined? A Critique on Walter Laqueur Dayyab Gillani	1
ii. Corrosion of Traditional Political Power in North Waziristan after 9/11: A Theoretical Analysis Hakeem Muhammad	22
iii. A Study of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) Social Media Communication: Major Trends, Key Themes and Propaganda Appeals Saif ur Rehman Tahir	42
iv. Critical Evaluation of the National Action Plan (NAP) Abdul Basit	68
v. From Counter-Terrorism to Counter Violent Extremism: An Analysis of Pakistan's Internal Security Policies Muhammad Makki and Syed Ali Akash	93
Vi. Global Cyber Terrorism: Pakistan's Cyber Security in Perspective Adil Adeel and Rafi us Shan	119

Can Terrorism be Defined? A Critique on Walter Laqueur¹

Dayyab Gillani

Abstract

This paper analyzes the contending debates regarding the definitions of terrorism. Led by the likes of Walter Laqueur, most academics believe that a definitional pursuit of terrorism is a futile exercise. This paper attempts to challenge this prevalent academic mindset. It argues that most academics, led by the prevalent perception, focus erroneously on the difference of opinion that exists in the terrorism discourse and tend to ignore the overwhelming similarities. The paper proposes that despite contrary claims, a universal understanding of terrorism can be realized by accounting for the similarities that exist in the academic literature. It identifies five recurring features of terrorism that are most commonly discussed and emphasized throughout terrorism literature. The paper proposes that these five factors are critical for the development of a universal understanding of terrorism. It also argues that state and non-state terrorism are different from each other and a formal distinction between the two is somewhat necessary for formal understanding and definitional development.

Keywords: Walter Laqueur, definition, terrorism, state-terrorism, non-state terrorism.

¹ This article has been adopted from a research paper that was written when I was doing my Masters in Politics at the University of Warwick. It has, however, not been published before.

Introduction

“Terrorism, one of the most widely discussed issues of our time, remains one of the least understood”.¹ “The term “terrorism” has no precise or widely accepted definition”.² “... most people have a vague idea or impression of what terrorism is but lack a more precise, concrete, and truly explanatory definition of the word”.³ “There is no agreed definition (of terrorism) in international law, nor is there a consensus among scholars”.⁴ “Laypersons might presume that this is an easily understood concept, but defining terrorism is not that simple”.⁵ “There continues to exist considerable uncertainty about what the right way to think about the problem (terrorism) is”.⁶ Such gloomy revelations are usually made in the opening chapters of books on terrorism. Almost every book on the subject is plagued with this overcast. Academicians and policy makers alike are at odds with the term terrorism. Amidst all this confusion, the term terrorism has unfortunately become an enigma, subject to subjective interpretations.

This disagreement on the exact definition and understanding of terrorism is not at all surprising, since many core concepts in political science such as democracy and nationalism defy universally accepted definitions. However, the problem with terrorism is that even its most basic attributes are also contested. For instance, despite the absence of a universal definition, it will

¹ Laqueur, Walter, *The Age of Terrorism* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1987), 1.

² Kegley, Charles W, *The New Global Terrorism: Characteristics, Causes, Controls* (NY St. Martins: Macmillan, 2008), 16.

³ Hoffman, Bruce, *Inside Terrorism* (Columbia University Press, 2006), 1.

⁴ Peter R. Neumann. *Old and New Terrorism* (Polity, 2009), 6.

⁵ Martin, Gus, *Essentials of Terrorism: Concepts and Controversies* (Sage Publications, 2008), 6.

⁶ Schmid, Alex, A. P., & Jongman, A. *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases* (Transaction Publishers, 1988), 1.

be difficult to say that one person's democracy is another person's dictatorship. Whereas, the phrase 'one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter', has become a common cliché in the modern world. An analysis of the academic literature will reveal the density of the discord regarding terrorism's definition.

Bruce Hoffman views terrorism as fundamentally and inherently political. Hoffman has identified certain important attributes of terrorism that not only distinguish it from other forms of violence but also contribute to its understanding. He believes that the most compelling reason, as to why terrorism is so difficult to define, is because the meaning of the term has changed quite frequently over the last two decades, which undermines all attempts to construct one consistent definition.⁷ Peter Neumann has analyzed this changing character of terrorism in detail. Neumann addresses the much-debated issue of 'new terrorism'. He believes that the current form of terrorism is indeed quite distinct, yet this newness needs to be understood "in the wider context of the evolving character of terrorism".⁸ Thus, for Neumann, terrorism is not essentially new but like everything else, it has merely evolved.

Gus Martin has forwarded the idea that terrorism should be defined by identifying the sources of terrorism and the primary source of all terrorist behaviour is "extremism".⁹ Thus, for Martin, extremism, characterized by intolerance, holds the key to understanding terrorism. Though he argues that having extremist beliefs by themselves are not acts of terrorism, it is only

⁷ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*.

⁸ Neumann, *Old and New Terrorism*, 12.

⁹ Martin, Gus, *Understanding Terrorism: Challenges, Perspectives, and Issues* (SAGE Publications, 2010), 37.

when someone violently acts out his/her extremist beliefs can they be termed as terrorists.¹⁰

George Fletcher concentrates on the jurisprudential aspect of terrorism. He proposes that terrorism should be treated as a “super-crime”, which has some of the characteristics of warfare.¹¹ He believes that it will be naïve to pursue a single definition of terrorism, since the concept has many different connotations.¹² In *The Indefinable Concept of Terrorism*, Fletcher identifies eight factors that have a strong bearing on Terrorism. However, he concludes that even after the identification of all variables, it is not possible to define terrorism. The reason for this is that “not all factors apply all the time”.¹³ This implies that in any given terrorist act, it is possible that some of the eight variables (as identified by Fletcher) will be at play, while some other might be missing. For Fletcher, this is the nature of all terrorist actions.

Walter Laqueur’s interpretation of terrorism is somewhat close to Fletcher’s understanding. He argues that the character of terrorism has changed greatly over the last century. This change is visible not only in the tactics of terrorism but also in the character of people that employ such tactics.¹⁴ Laqueur, like Fletcher argues that the nature and meaning of terrorism has evolved substantially. It will, therefore, be fruitless to define terrorism in the light of recent events since terrorism at present is mainly Islamic fundamentalist in character, whereas only a few decades ago it

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹George Fletcher, “The indefinable concept of terrorism,” *Journal of international criminal justice* 4, no. 5 (2006), 900.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 894.

¹⁴ Laqueur, *The Age of Terrorism*.

predominantly emanated from the left-wing or extreme right-wing.¹⁵ Thus, Laqueur mainly argues that defining terrorism is not only an impossible task but also a futile effort. He believes “that the study of terrorism can manage with a minimum of theory”.¹⁶

Alex Schmid is extremely critical of such an approach and strongly emphasizes the need for an effective and standard definition of terrorism. He argues that the academics should not give up the quest for a Universalist definition of terrorism. Schmid believes that without a formal definition of terrorism, “there can be no uniform data collection and no responsible theory building on terrorism”.¹⁷

Analysis of the available literature, thus, depicts defining terrorism as an insurmountable task. However, despite this gloomy picture portrayed by most of the literature, there is a ray of hope. The academics may indeed have been fairly efficient at pointing out the disparities that exist in terrorism literature, they have however failed to acknowledge the similarities. Almost all academic experts, while attempting to define/understand terrorism, identify certain characteristics, which are remarkably similar in all available terrorism discourse. These similarities of characteristics of terrorism form the basis of this paper.

Terrorism is a unique form of violence with distinct characteristics, and the key to understanding and defining it is in these very characteristics. This paper will point out *five* main characteristics of terrorism that have been identified by most of the academic literature. These five characteristics are:

¹⁵ Laqueur, Walter, *No End to War: Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century* (London/New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2004).

¹⁶ Laqueur as cited in Schmid, 1988, p. 3

¹⁷ Ibid

inherently political, psychological impact, terrorism as a distinct form of violence, repetition and senseless violence. The paper mainly argues that an analysis and identification of these characteristics can help in formulating a universal definition of terrorism. Although the paper does not propose or suggest any formal definition of terrorism, it primarily aims at identifying the platform, which can be utilized for such pursuit.

An important distinction, however, must be made at the outset. The paper will assume the position that there are two broad categories of terrorism, state terrorism and non-state terrorism. The two are different from one another and from a conceptual point of view, should therefore be treated as such. This categorization is important because much of the literature tends to combine the two, which not only makes it hard to understand terrorism but also diminishes any chances of a universally accepted definition. This distinction and its bearing on the definition of terrorism will be discussed in detail in last part of the paper. I will start by briefly explaining why I disagree with Walter and that a universal definition of terrorism is indeed very much possible.

Why disagree with Laqueur?

A brief review of academic literature (as above) exposes the intellectual divide over the definition of terrorism. The critics argue that attempting to define terrorism is a futile exercise and all such efforts are destined to fail. Furthermore, they believe that all such efforts take the focus off the threat of terrorism, which in fact should be the foremost concern.

Walter Laqueur holds that it is simply not possible to find an objective universal definition of terrorism, because even if there were any such

definition, “it would be rejected by some for ideological reasons”.¹⁸ Laqueur¹⁹ holds that even if there is no agreed definition of terrorism, it does not mean that we do not know more about terrorism than we did a decade ago, nor should such a failure discourage us from studying the subject.

Laqueur believes that the main focus of both academics and policy makers should be on countering the threat of terrorism rather than the vain and ineffective debate over its definition. Such a claim is also backed by some other academics. Thomas Mockaitis, for instance, insists that “we need a functional rather than a theoretical definition of the problem”.²⁰ Mockaitis believes that such a functional definition would require a focus on ‘terror’ rather than terrorism itself. Thus, the critics take the view that even though terrorism cannot be defined, it can still be identified and hence countered accordingly.

The contribution of Alex Schmid in the field of defining terrorism is particularly noteworthy. He believes that the academic pursuit for a universal definition of terrorism should not be abandoned. He acknowledges that there are numerous hurdles in defining terrorism but that should not discourage academic scholars. Schmid argues that with the current “global war on terrorism”,²¹ countries are spending millions of dollars and have lost thousands of lives. All the people fighting this war have the right to know what they are fighting. He believes that a lack of

¹⁸ Laqueur, *The Age of Terrorism*, 149-50.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Mockaitis, Thomas R, *The "New" Terrorism: Myths and Reality* (Stanford University Press, 2008), 2-3.

²¹ Alex Schmid, "Terrorism-the definitional problem," *Case W. Res. J. Int'l L.* 36 (2004): 376.

definition not only implies that we don't know what we are fighting, but such an attitude also encourages future terrorism. Thomas Badey is also of such disposition and argues that in order to counter the threat of terrorism, "the definitional dilemma must be resolved".²²

This paper will second Schmid's position and argue that a definition of terrorism is not only required but is also very much plausible. It is true that without a universal definition, the term terrorism can be misused, which can have severe consequences. The term terrorism, as of now, has virtually no boundaries and is more than often distorted and misused for relative advantage.²³ Furthermore, the causes of terrorism can never be fully realized if there is no universal understanding of the term. Thus, it is imperative to have a universal definition of terrorism that can help in identifying its root causes and avoid its misuse. The definition of terrorism can be realized by analyzing its most common features discussed in the academic literature. I will start with the 'inherently political feature' of terrorism, which is the foremost feature of terrorism, vivid in almost the entire academic literature.

Defining Characteristics of terrorism

Inherently political

All terrorist violence essentially is politically driven. There are rarely any counter arguments to this overly assertive claim. The academic literature is almost unanimous over the inherent political nature of terrorism. This assertion is reemphasized by the fact that terrorism is more than often

²² Thomas Badey, "Defining international terrorism: A pragmatic approach," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 10, no. 1 (1998): 105.

²³ Schmid, *Terrorism-the Definitional Problem*.

categorized under political violence. Almost all academic definitions of terrorism bear witness to this statement. Hoffman, for instance, argues that “terrorism, in the most widely accepted contemporary usage of the term, is fundamentally and inherently political”.²⁴ Martin, who builds his model of terrorism around extremism, insists that “It is important to understand that extremism is a radical expression of political values”.²⁵ Similarly Badey insists that, “Once past the rhetoric, the over-riding purpose of almost all international terrorism is political”.²⁶ Likewise, Neumann, Schmid, Laqueur, Kegley, Fletcher and all other terrorism experts stress, in one way or the other, the importance of underlying political ideology in all terrorist activities.

From the bombing of US embassies (in 1983 and 1998) to the September 11 attacks in 2001, all were politically driven. The central ideology of almost all known terrorist organizations is also political in nature. Al-Qaeda, for instance, demands the removal of US forces from Saudi Arabia and a resolution of the Palestine and Kashmir problem. IRA (Irish Republic Army), PKK (Kurdish Workers Party) and almost all other identified terrorist organizations have a clear visible underlying political ideology. Thus, it can be safely said that all terrorist violence, essentially is politically driven, and this underlying political feature can indeed be treated as a defining attribute of terrorism.

²⁴ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 2.

²⁵ Martin, *Essentials of Terrorism*, 3.

²⁶ Badey, "Defining international terrorism," 96.

Psychological Impact

I have up till now shown that an underlying political ideology is the first and foremost defining feature of terrorism, which is emphasized almost unanimously in all academic literature. The second major attribute of terrorism is the psychological impact, which is perhaps the most visible attribute of terrorism. Likewise, it is also strongly emphasized in all terrorism literature. Almost all proposed academic definitions highlight the psychological impact of terrorism.²⁷ Empirical evidence suggests that in terms of intensity and casualties, terrorism surprisingly is perhaps the lowest form of violence.²⁸ Brian Jenkins famous quotation, “terrorism is theater”,²⁹ primarily aims to highlight this attribute of terrorism. The greater the spectacle the terrorists make, the greater the psychological impact it generates.

If the phenomenon of terrorism was to be judged by the number of people it kills, it would probably just be disregarded as another mundane activity. A comparison of terrorist violence with insurgency, guerilla warfare, criminal violence and even everyday accidents reveals a sharp contrast. The 9/11 attacks is considered to be the deadliest attack in the history of terrorism, prior to this, it is argued that no terrorist operation had managed to kill more than five hundred people.³⁰

Thus, in comparison with other forms of violence, terrorism perhaps claims the least number of lives, yet it is the most important form of violence today.

²⁷ See Schmid, 2004, 2008; Hoffman, 2006; Guelke, 1995; Laqueur, 2004; Kegley, 2008.

²⁸ Guelke, Adrian, *The Age of Terrorism and the International Political System* (Tauris Academic Studies, 1995).

²⁹ Brian Jenkins, ‘Terrorism: A New Mode of Conflict’. In *International Terrorism and World Security*, eds. D. Carlton & C. Schaerf (London: Croom Helm, 1975), 158.

³⁰ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*.

So much so that the modern age is often referred to as ‘the age of terrorism.’ This peculiarity primarily owes to the psychological impact of terrorism. Kegley refers to this characteristic as “the hallmark of terrorism” that intends to produce “psychological effects beyond the immediate physical damage”.³¹

The psychological impact of terrorism primarily entails generation of fear in the minds of public. Since ‘terror’ is part of the word terrorism, the element of fear is naturally its integral component. Badey³², for instance, argues that fear and anxiety are essential components of terrorism. Terrorism intends at generating fear in minds of public by conducting a violent action against a group of people or a single person (usually randomly selected) from a certain population (also referred to as the target population) where they intend to generate fear.³³ Since the motive of the perpetrators of the terrorist attacks is to generate fear, they do not care about the victim itself, whose sole purpose is to generate message to the intended/target population. As Schmid points out, “the particular effect of the terrorist message results from the fact that it is written, as it were, with the blood of people who matter to the addressee, but not to the sender”.³⁴

Thus, the psychological impact of terrorist violence, beyond its immediate victims, is perhaps the most striking feature of terrorism.³⁵ Even though the 9/11 attacks, considered as the deadliest in the history of terrorism, took almost 3000 lives, this loss is nothing compared to the hundreds of thousands of lives lost in Africa during the recent civil wars. Yet, the

³¹ Kegley, *The New Global Terrorism*, 18.

³² Badey, "Defining international terrorism,".

³³ See Schmid, 2011.

³⁴ Ibid., 17.

³⁵ Guelke, *The Age of Terrorism*.

psychological impact that 9/11 attacks produced was unprecedented as it psychologically affected almost the entire world. Guelke calls this feature of terrorism the “terrorism paradox”,³⁶ where terrorists kill only a few people but psychologically affect thousands.

A distinct form of violence

The ‘underlying political ideology’ and the huge ‘psychological impact’ have so far been identified as the main defining attributes of terrorism. It has also been shown that these two elements are visible in almost the entire literary work. The next feature of terrorism is also emphasized strongly in most of the academic literature, as most experts on terrorism distinguish terrorism from other forms of violence. A clear distinction is particularly made between terrorism, insurgency, guerilla warfare and criminal violence.³⁷ Such a distinction not only shows terrorism as a distinct form of violence but also contributes towards its understanding.

Insurgency and guerilla warfare are neutral terms when compared to terrorism. Most insurgents and guerillas follow irregular military tactics, often have organized command and control system, usually exercise some control over a defined geographical area and most importantly often enjoy popular support from certain segments of society. Terrorists, on the other hand, are usually unorganized, exercise no formal control over any geographical territory and usually do not enjoy support from any fragment of the population.³⁸

³⁶ Ibid., 7.

³⁷ See Laqueur, 1987, 2004; Schmid, 2004; Kegley, 2008; Hoffman, 2006; Guelke, 1995.

³⁸ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*.

Furthermore, both insurgency and guerilla warfare are usually viewed within the context of war whereas terrorism is more than often viewed in the “context of peace”.³⁹ This later categorization is particularly important because it not only distinguishes terrorism from insurgency and guerilla warfare but also explains why terrorism appears so horrific. Violence appears to make sense if it is viewed in the context of war, since it is normal to expect violence and hostility during war. On the other hand, violence during peacetime defies both logic and reason and since terrorism usually takes place in relative peace, therefore it appears to be so much appalling.

There is also a significant difference between terrorism and criminal violence. The main difference between a terrorist and a criminal is perhaps that of motives. Even though it is possible that both criminals and terrorists can employ similar tactics, such as kidnapping, there will always be a clear difference between the two. A criminal is primarily driven by greed or some personal motives, whereas a terrorist’s primary motive is the pursuit of some political agenda.⁴⁰ Secondly, a criminal does not usually seek publicity and his/her actions are not designed or intended to have psychological consequences, whereas the primary motive of all terrorist actions is to seek publicity and create deep psychological impact.⁴¹

Terrorism is also fundamentally different from assassination. The main difference between the two forms of violence is in their respective motives. An assassin aims at having the victim dead, whereas a terrorist does not care about the victim itself.⁴² Secondly, an assassin achieves his motive by

³⁹ Guelke, *The Age of Terrorism*.

⁴⁰ Badey, "Defining international terrorism,".

⁴¹ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*.

⁴² Schmid, *Political Terrorism*.

eliminating his target, whereas a terrorist's motive, that is generation of fear, begins with the elimination of a certain target.⁴³

Even though it is argued that the distinction between terrorism and other forms of violence does not always observe all the differences identified and there is often significant overlap,⁴⁴ however, the fact remains that almost the entire academic literature points out these differences. This academic consensus can be used to the advantage of defining and understanding terrorism.

Repetition

The fourth important characteristic of terrorism is 'repetition.' This feature of terrorism is also regularly highlighted by leading terrorism scholars.⁴⁵ It is true that individual acts of violence often resemble terrorism (as such acts could employ similar methods of violence), however, they should not be treated as terrorism. Isolated and individual acts of violence are not capable of generating fear and psychological impact the way repeated violence does. The element of repetition implies a "systematic pattern of violence", which is common in all terrorist activities.⁴⁶

This systematic pattern of violence is one of the hallmarks of terrorism. As I have already mentioned that fear generation and psychological impact are the main motives of all terrorist activities, the terrorists ensure these two features through repetition of their violent activities. As Badey points out, "Terror is something one feels. Terrorism is the repeated, systematic

⁴³ See Schmid, 2008; Hoffman, 2006; Guelke 1995.

⁴⁴ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*.

⁴⁵ See Schmid, 2004; Hofmann, 2006; Fletcher, 2006; Badey, 1998.

⁴⁶ Badey, "Defining international terrorism," 93-95.

exploitation of this fear”.⁴⁷ The phenomenon of repetition is closely tied up with the organizational character of terrorism.

In order to ensure repetition and systematic pattern of violence, the terrorists need organizational connections to keep supply of fresh recruits. Isolated and individual acts of violence are never able to generate fear the way systematic violence does. This is because when the individual attacker is arrested or killed in the act, it generates a sigh of relief, as people know that the threat is either dealt with or is no longer there. Whereas in case of a terrorist act people are aware that the threat of violence still lingers on and could strike them at any time.

This threat of repetition of a certain violent act is ensured through the organizational character of terrorism. As Fletcher argues, “After the particular offender is arrested or killed in the act, the organization lives on to threaten another day. Thus we experience terror more deeply when we perceive the individual suicide bomber not as a lone wolf, but as one of many potential agents organized and funded by terrorist handlers”.⁴⁸

Thus, the organizational affiliation in terrorism matters significantly, since otherwise the violent act could be just another random criminal act. An analysis of the Al-Qaeda violent actions presents a systematic pattern of violence. The 1993 bombing of world trade center was followed by a deadly attack on US embassies in Africa (1998), this was followed by an attack on the US destroyer in the Yemeni port of Aden (2000), which was then followed by the 9/11 attacks in 2001. Thus, the operations of Al-Qaeda clearly show a pattern of systematic violence or simply repetition of

⁴⁷ Ibid., 93.

⁴⁸ Fletcher, “The indefinable concept,” 908.

violence. This repetition is critical for all terrorist actions as they serve their purpose of generating fear.

Meaningless and senseless violence

The four characteristics (inherently political, psychological impact, distinct form of violence and repetition) that have so far been identified, apply universally to all definitions and interpretations of terrorism. The last categorization of terrorism as meaningless and senseless violence, however, is limited only to non-state terrorism but is not any less important. This feature of terrorism is quite important and is, therefore, equally emphasized in academic literature.⁴⁹

Most of the terrorist acts appear senseless and meaningless; this is another important reason why terrorism is viewed as horrendous and dreadful. The rationale for this reaction is that people do not see any logic behind terrorist acts. The motivations of terrorists are clouded by their actions. Ordinary people and academics alike often fail to establish any link between a terrorist's act and his/her desired motive. It has already been stated that a terrorist does not care about the immediate victim and is only concerned about the message it generates. This generated message is more than often only interpreted in terms of fear and disgust. The underlying political motive is overshadowed by the violent action and the terrorist only succeeds in communicating a sense of fear and not the political ideology. This failure to communicate the real purpose of the terrorist act makes the whole act appear meaningless and senseless.

⁴⁹ See Schmid, 2004; Laqueur, 1987, 2004; Hoffman, 2006; Kegley, 2008; Neumann, 2009.

Furthermore, even if the people and the academics succeed at establishing a link between a terrorist act and its political ideology, they will still fail to see how such a violent act could bring about the desired political change, since terrorist political ideology rarely succeeds.⁵⁰ This feature further distinguishes terrorism from other forms of violence such as insurgency, which has relatively greater chances of success and therefore has a clear link between its motives and actions.

Al-Qaeda's political ideology, for instance, demands the removal of US forces from Saudi-Arabia and a resolution of the Palestine and Kashmir problem. The actions they choose to achieve their ambitions are a series of systematic attack against almost all western citizens. It is hard to imagine how such actions might bring about a change in the US foreign policy. It is also impossible, for instance, to imagine that Al-Qaeda can succeed in resolving the Palestine issue by blowing up the world trade center. This huge distance between the actions and motives of terrorist acts combined with little to no chances of success, makes them look meaningless and senseless. However, at the same time, this very attribute is a defining feature of all terrorist acts.

State Vs Non-state Terrorism

I have identified five distinct features of terrorism that are highlighted in most of the academic literature. Out of these five, the first four apply uniformly to both state and non-state terrorism. The last feature, meaningless and senseless violence, however, holds true for only non-state terrorism. The analysis done so far has primarily focused on non-state

⁵⁰ Guelke, *The Age of Terrorism*.

terrorism, which is understandable since the main reason why the contemporary age is called ‘the age of terrorism’ is because of non-state terrorism. It can be argued that ‘state-sponsor terrorism’ is different from both these two categories. However, the fact remains that ‘state-sponsor terrorism’ is nothing but financing/sponsoring of non-state terrorists by state actors; therefore, it cannot have any bearing on the definition of terrorism as long as non-state terrorism is fully comprehended.

Some scholars, however, are apprehensive of such categorization. Schmid⁵¹, for instance, argues that such a categorization is not very helpful as for instance we use the word war for both guerilla war and nuclear war, even though the two are obviously very different. I will however disagree and argue that such categorization is rather imperative for understanding of terrorism. For a start, state terrorism is violence from above, whereas non-state terrorism is violence from below. Secondly, even though the two share four of the five features identified in this paper, they vary greatly on the fifth.

In state terrorism, it is fairly easy to establish a link between the motives of the state and its actions. Furthermore, state terrorism has very high chances of success as compared to non-state terrorism, as it has huge resources at its disposal, which to a great extent increases its relative chances of success. Thus, the terrorism committed by the state does not seem meaningless and senseless. An example of Iraq under Saddam Hussein will further elucidate this point.

⁵¹ Schmid, *Political Terrorism*.

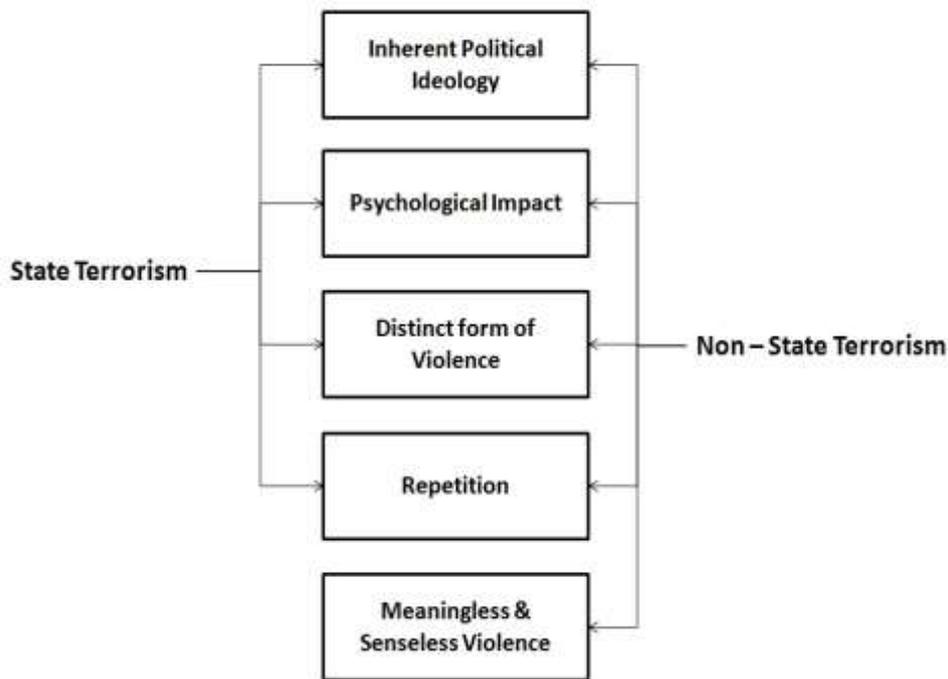
In 1988, Saddam Hussein used chemical weapons to subdue Iraqi Kurdish population. The attacks killed over thirty thousand people.⁵² These attacks are popularly referred to as acts of state terrorism in academic literature. An analysis of this act of state terrorism reveals that it was primarily politically motivated and was intended to terrorize the Kurdish population into subjugation. Repeated acts of violence were committed against the Kurdish people to keep them in a state of constant fear. This violence was also quite distinct from other forms of violence such as insurgency and guerilla warfare. Thus, the analysis shows that the case of Saddam's Iraq is consistent with four of the identified features of terrorism but not with the fifth one. This inconsistency is obvious because a clear link can be established between Saddam's political motives and his actions. Also there was little, if at all any, doubt about his success. Thus, his actions do not appear to be senseless and meaningless.

However, if we were to apply all the five features of terrorism to Saddam's Iraq, it would probably not qualify as terrorism because the political motives of Saddam Hussein were clearly visible and he had absolute chances of success. At the same time, the fifth feature of meaningless and senseless violence cannot be abandoned because it is a defining attribute of non-state terrorism (as explained earlier). Thus, it is best to assume that four of the five elements of terrorism apply to state terrorism whereas all five hold true for non-state terrorism. This variety must be realized and acknowledged by the academic community as the reluctance to separate state and non-state

⁵² Aburish, Said K., *Saddam Hussein: The Politics of Revenge* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2001).

terrorism poses serious challenges for a broad and comprehensive understanding of terrorism.

Five major Characteristics of Terrorism



Conclusion

This paper has attempted to show that a universal definition of terrorism is fairly plausible. It has argued that despite conflicting arguments and contrary claims, the answers to finding a universal definition are within the academic literature. Without a formal definition, the term terrorism will have no boundaries and can virtually be applied to any form of violence. The academics frequently point out the disparities that exist in terrorism literature but fail to acknowledge the overwhelming similarities. A universal definition of terrorism is essential because it is hard to imagine a global war on terrorism without a formal distinction of what it is being

waged against. If the pursuit of the definition of terrorism is abandoned, then the term terrorism can virtually be applied to anything for relative gains and the underlying causes and thereby the dream of prevention of terrorism will never be fully realized.

The paper has also identified and discussed five main features of terrorism: inherently political, psychological impact, terrorism as a distinct form of violence, repetition and meaningless and senseless violence. These five features are present in almost the entire academic literature and their formal realization and acknowledgement can help us in formulating a universal definition of terrorism.

I have also further argued that the definitional problem of terrorism must be assessed at two distinct levels, state terrorism and non-state terrorism. Much of the failure in academic literature to agree upon a common understanding of terrorism is because these two categories are usually integrated. Four of the five identified features are consistent with state terrorism whereas, all five are apply to non-state terrorism. Thus, an acknowledgement of the similarities in terrorism literature and a formal distinction between state and non-state terrorism is imperative for full understanding and definitional development of the term terrorism.

***Dr . Dayyab Gillani** is Assistant Professor at the Political Science Department, University of the Punjab, Lahore. He can be reached at dayyabgillani.polsc@pu.edu.pk.*

Corrosion of Traditional Political Power in North Waziristan after 9/11: A Theoretical Analysis

Hakim Muhammad

Abstract

The land of North Waziristan since the event of 9/11 has become the seedbed of terrorism. The unrestricted and free movement on the Durand Line between Pakistan and Afghanistan provided an opportunity for Taliban to crisscross the border freely and to increase their influence in the region. North Waziristan, traditionally being ruled by *Malik* (village headmen), *Masher* (elders) and the Political Agent through *Jirga* (council), superseded and dominated by Taliban leaders. Through brute force and incorporation of religion Taliban surpassed the traditional powers of *Malik* and the Political Agent and brought *Jirga* in their folds. They slaughtered hundreds of civilians and *Malik* and got control over the socio-political and economic structures of North Waziristan. Different foreign terrorists and local Taliban groups used to torture, abuse, and harass the local people. The Pashtun traditions of *Pashtunwali* corroded immensely because of the prevailing troublesome environment. The existing laws of the Frontier Crime Regulations (FCR) were largely the reasons for the troublesome situation in North Waziristan. The existing laws failed not only in restricting the activities of Taliban but also in dealing with them through comprehensive mechanism. What is needed in the area is to accelerate the integration process. The National Action Plan (NAP) represents just such an initiative as its provisions deal with the menace of terrorism and provides counter terrorism mechanism, inspiration and guidelines for FATA reforms. The erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) through effective

implementation of NAP can successfully be brought in the folds of development.

Keywords – *Malik*, Taliban, Terrorism

Introduction

The war on terror after the 9/11 attacks shocked and collided the world with its worse global impacts. The United States of America (USA's) attack and invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 compelled Afghan Taliban to cross the border into Pakistan and to get refuge in Pakistan, especially in the tribal areas. Taliban penetrated in North Waziristan as well; re-emerged in different local and foreign groups and North Waziristan promptly fell off to terrorism and became the epicenter of terrorism. Pakistan being not a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)¹ still as ally of the USA started military operations against terrorists in the region. Taliban and Pakistan's military confronted each other in violent aggressions in 2006 in North Waziristan.

In historical context, the socio-political power in North Waziristan has been determined by hegemonic, religious, and socio-economic status of an individual and has been exercised by *Malik*, *Masher*, *Pir* (mystical saint), *Sayid*² and *Mullah* (religious leader) of a clan or tribe, while the state's legal

¹ The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, also called the North Atlantic Alliance, is an intergovernmental military alliance between several North American and European states based on the North Atlantic Treaty that was signed on 4 April 1949 (see Sarwar A. Kashmiri, *The North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy: Intersection Trajectories Pennsylvania*, (Pennsylvania, Strategic Studies Institute, 2011), 15.

² Descendent of the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) family. See Anatol Lieven, *Pakistan a Hard Country*, (Washington, Public Affairs, 2012), 144.

constitutional power is interpreted and incorporated by the Political Agent with the help of *Malik*.³ *Malik* in Pashtun society preserves leading status and abide by the responsibility to resolve the social, political and economic problems under the realm of *Pashtunwali*⁴ through *Jirga*.⁵ However, there have been changes taken place within these power exercising groups due to the changing dynamics of the society and politics of the region. Escalation and expansion in trade, business, migration to the Gulf Countries, *Afghan Jihad*⁶ and the war against terrorism have profound impacts on the socio-political setups and the junctures of power. These factors have brought new alternative power excreting actors by subduing the previous actors, largely because of incomprehensiveness of Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR)⁷ and lawlessness in the region.⁸ The FCR lacked in inclusiveness to control terrorism in the region. It is a law that halted social, political, and economic development of the area. While contrary to it, before 25th amendment constitutional development and modernization of the laws of the country developed a sense of depravity in the people of erstwhile FATA. Terrorism

3 David Loyn, *Butcher and Bolt: Two Hundred Years of Foreign Engagement in Afghanistan*, (London, Hutchinson, 2008), 145-162.

4 *Pashtunwali* is the traditional lifestyle of Pashtuns It is the dichotomy of honor and shame. (see Lutz Rzehak, *Doing Pashto- Pashtunwali as the Ideal of Honorable Behavior and Tribal Life among the Pashtuns*, (Kabul, Afghanistan Analysis Network, 2011), 1.

5 Ghulam Q. Khan, *Cheegha. The Call from Waziristan, the last outpost*, (Sweden, I' Aleph, 2014), 56-57.

6 The Soviet–Afghan War (*jihad*) was a conflict wherein insurgent groups collectively known as the *mujahideen* and other smaller groups, fought a guerrilla war against the Soviet Army and the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan government for more than nine years, throughout the 1980s. See Maleeha Lodhi, ed. *Pakistan Beyond the Crisis State*, (London, C. Hurst & Co, 2011), 301-304.

7 The Frontier Crimes Regulations were specialized collection of laws of British India and afterwards Pakistan, which were applicable to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. They were legislated by the British in the nineteenth century and continued implemented in Pakistan until 2018. (See Benjamin D. Hopkins, The Frontier Crimes Regulation and Frontier Governmentality, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 74, no.2 (2015), 370,375.

8 Akbar S. Ahmed, *Social and Economic Changes in the Tribal Areas, 1972-1976*, (Karachi, Oxford University Press, 1977), 45.

is a termite for the area, and it can be controlled and eliminated by the socio-political and economic development as ensured by the National Action Plan (NAP).⁹

Theoretical Framework

The research is centered on the analysis of the Italian Marxist philosopher and politician Antonio Francesco Gramsci's concept of "hegemony" and "counter hegemony". Gramsci believes that revolution is inevitable in a society where "contradictory developments"¹⁰ are essential to the capitalist mode of production and proletariat being universal class will win the revolutionary struggle against the bourgeoisie. He considers that a social class or group maintains dominancy by two ways: domination and hegemony. Domination is the rule by coercion and hegemony is the rule by consent. He argues that the bourgeoisie rule by consent and when necessary coercion is also not compromised.¹¹ "Hegemony might be defined as an "organizing principle" or "world view" (or combination of such world views) that is defused by agencies of ideological control and socialization in every area of daily life".¹²

⁹ The National Action Plan is an action plan that was established by the Government of Pakistan in January 2015 to crack down on terrorism and to supplement the ongoing anti-terrorist offensive in Federally Administered Tribal Areas. (see Sajjad Ahmed, *A Twenty-Point Recipe of Peace-the National Action Plan to Pakistan: Context, Analysis and Evaluation of Success and Pitfalls*, (Nagoya, iafor, 2016), 1.

¹⁰ Evolution of contradiction in beliefs, ideas and practices. (See Issa G. Shivji, *Contradictory Developments in the Teachings and Practice of Human Rights Law in Tanzania*, *Journal of African Law* 35, no ½ (1991), 120.

¹¹ Quentin Hoare & Geoffrey N. Smith, *Selection from the Prison Note Books of Antonio Gramsci*, (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), 506-508.

¹² Carl Boggs, *Gramsci's Marxism*, (London, Pluto, 1976), 39.

According to Gramsci, the bourgeoisie maintain and acquire consent of the subordinate classes through massive indoctrination, ideological supremacy and ideological mystification.¹³ Furthermore, he emphasises that ideology, culture and consciousness are the foundations of earning consent. He also brings in focus the importance of economic structure in the construction of hegemony. “Though hegemony is ethical-political, it must also be economic, must necessarily be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity”.¹⁴

Similarly, in North Waziristan *Malik* through cultural consciousness and by consent, maintained hegemony and the state through legal authority observed dominancy. Furthermore, *Malik* in North Waziristan forms the powerful class in society because of economic and political supremacy.

Gramsci believes that hegemony is overturned by counter-hegemony and that counter-hegemonic group arises by subduing the pre-existing hegemonic group. He emphasis that in association to contradict hegemony, the counter hegemonic group needs to focus on the state’s core issues along with the issues related to national and transnational civil societies. It is a model of political and ideological construction based on interrelationship of a counter hegemonic force with other social groups, struggling for future interests against the bourgeoisie hegemony. It leads to different revolutionary democratic forms of hegemonic developments through solidarity, cooperation and communication that quest cataclysmic modification of society by exploiting political opportunities due to elite

¹³ Ralph Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society*, (New York, Basic Books, 1969), 45-47.

¹⁴ Quentin Hoare & Geoffrey Nowell Smith, *Selection from the Prison Note Books of Antonio Gramsci*, (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), 161.

discordancy, political conversions, or demographic changes.¹⁵ Thus the counter hegemonic force develops a "historical block"¹⁶ of the subordinate classes within the womb of a capitalist society.

"From the moment in which a subaltern group becomes really autonomous and hegemonic, thus bringing into being a new form of State, we experience the concrete birth of a need to construct a new intellectual and moral order, that is, a new type of society and hence the need to develop more universal concepts and more refined and decisive ideological weapons".¹⁷

He further indicates that the counter hegemonic class must represent a universal plan for the formation of a universal class, and it must practice leadership before becoming a counter hegemonic group and before winning the government power.¹⁸ Beside it, Gramsci represents two forms of counter hegemony: 'war of position/war of maneuver' and war of 'movement/frontal attack'. War of position is the slow and hidden conflict where forces seek to gain influence and power whereas the war of movement is a phase of open conflict between classes. Its outcome is based on the direct clashes between classes. The strategy of war of position is

¹⁵ Zahir Ahmed, Trevor Hopper and Danture Wickramasinghe, *Hegemony, Counter Hegemony and Accountability in BRAC – a Bangladesh NGO*, (Asia Pacific, 2010), 2-3.

¹⁶ Historical Block according to Antonio Gramsci are ways in which social practices and structures both are created, and which eventually create values and theories and the values and theories are used to rationalize and explain our practices. (See Carl Boggs, *Gramsci's Marxism*, (London, Pluto, 1976), 46.

¹⁷ Quentin Hoare & Geoffrey Nowell Smith, *Selection from the Prison Note Books of Antonio Gramsci*, (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), 388.

¹⁸ Quentin Hoare & Geoffrey N. Smith, *Selection from the Prison Note Books of Antonio Gramsci*, (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), 560-565.

more constructive and of long term while the strategy of war of movement is more destructive and of short term.¹⁹

In relation to the counter hegemonic concept of Gramsci, Taliban contradicted the hegemony of *Malik* and the state's legal authority by working out a universal plan, based on political and ideological constructions. They replaced *Malik* by Taliban leaders and supplant *Jirga* by their brand of *Shariah* law. They exploited *Malik* discordancy and political conversions of the state and the *Malik*. Thus, they developed a historical block of the subordinate classes of society based on religious indoctrination and dominancy. However, Taliban's hegemony was being founded on war of movement was therefore short lived.

Transformation in Traditional Political Power: A Historical Perspective

Malik formulate the leading political and power dominating class of Pashtun society. The dominant and hegemonic position of *Malik* traditionally²⁰ binds people with the state and possess the ultimate power to administer social issues along with the consent of the people.²¹ On the basis of egalitarianism anyone having enough influence and the qualities required for a *Malik* can occupy the status of *Malik*. However, in various clans, the

¹⁹ Ajit Chaudhuri, From Hegemony to Counter-Hegemony: A Journey in a Non-Imaginary Unreal Space, Mumbai, *Economic and Political Weekly* 23, no.5, (1988), 2-4 (Accessed 22 April 2020).

²⁰ Tradition is applied to the procession of handing down from generation to generation something corresponding to behavior, beliefs, and custom, or thought process that is proceeded on over time. See Nelson H. H. Graburn, *What is Tradition?*, (Arlington, American Anthropological Association, 2001), 1.

²¹ Marc Weitz, *The Jirga*, Washington, *Journal of Legal Education* 62, no.3 (2013), 504-505.

status of *Malik* is certified to a particular family and the leadership is attributed to the most competent and experienced male person.²² *Malik* is the wealthy, democratic and the main crew of 'doing Pashto', which means to indulge oneself in the cultural ways of conduct and all the segments that constitute '*Pashtunwali*'.²³ The British deeply empowered and transformed the institution of *Malik*. By the means of *Malik*, the Britisher indirectly ruled²⁴ over the tribal people. In reward *Malik* were entitled with large estates of land, allowances, and quotas and for food ration. After the formation of Pakistan, the significance of *Malik* expanded in the region by obtaining political rights e.g. right to vote for choosing members for the National Assembly from FATA, to appoint levies, to get building contracts and to attest domicile certificates for the people.²⁵

In the tribal areas state is represented by the Political Agent and asserts the legal power of the state. Political Agent is supposed to be partial ambassador and partial governor because his job is to keep people engaged with the state and to implement the laws of FCR.²⁶ FCR is a law which specifically deals

²² James W. Spain, *The Way of the Pathans*, (London, Oxford University Press, 1962), 49

²³ Hugh Beattie, *Imperial Frontier: Tribe and State in Waziristan*, (London, Curzon Press, 2002), 65.

²⁴ Indirect rule was a system of governance used by the British and French to control territories of their colonial empires, specifically in Africa and Asia, through the pre-existing indigenous power structures. These dependencies were frequently called "protectorates" or "trucial states". (see Michael Crowder, *Indirect Rule: French and British Style*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1964), 2-5.

²⁵ Shahida Aman, *Malik-Militancy Conundrum: Deciphering the Transitions in the traditional Pakhtun Leadership*, (Islamabad, Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, 2013),5.

²⁶ James W. Spain, *The Way of the Pathans*, (London, Oxford University Press, 1962), 25.

with all kinds of criminal justice in FATA and the Political Agent acts like a District Magistrate.²⁷

“We must recognize the unbridled and unlimited powers of the Political Agent. He has extensive powers, with no recourse to any court of law against his decisions. With every power comes responsibility and accountability but here we have a position where we have no responsibility or accountability. All the raw power is just to be enjoyed by being ruthless, to be as dehumanized as an alien colonial master, who only wants to scare and scar the subjects”.²⁸

Islam came and spread in the Pashtun areas through *Sayyids* and they have also been a hegemonic power in North Waziristan before partition of the Indian subcontinent.²⁹ Near Pashtuns *Sayyids* have wide respect and were the prime source of waging religious war in the tribal areas. *Pir* also occupies the same prestigious status as *Sayyid*. *Pir* is a religious, pious, and highly blessed person, commonly known for his blessings and his spiritual energy and strength gained by mystics. The factors behind the profound influence of *Sayyids* and *Pirs* on society were to adjudicate between groups, clans and tribes for the maintenance of peace, blessings for the treatment of illness and to impart religious knowledge to the people.³⁰ However, the *Afghan Jihad* (1979-1989) shook the politics of North Waziristan to a

²⁷ Muhammad Faheem, *Property Rights, Contracts and Development: A Study of the Traditional Institutions of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan*, (Auckland, Researchspace, 2012),

²⁸ Ghulam Q. Khan, *Cheegha. The Call from Waziristan, the last outpost*, (Sweden, I’Aleph, 2014) 125.

²⁹ James W. Spain, *The Way of the Pathans*, (London, Oxford University Press, 1962), 49.

³⁰ Shahida Aman, *Malik-Militancy Conundrum: Deciphering the Transitions in the traditional Pakhtun Leadership*, (Islamabad, Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, 2013) 5-6

greater extent and had considerable impacts on the hegemonic power and influence of *Sayyids* and *pirs*.

Throughout the duration of the *Afghan Jihad*, Mosque *Mullah* stretched his power from Mosque to the politics of North Waziristan; though prior the cold war *Mullah* was apolitical, and his task was limited to Mosque and was entirely dependent on *Malik* for his survival.³¹ In Pashtun society *Mullah* is revered and carries key status and position. *Mullah* manages and guides the rituals of Pashtuns and keeps people on the path of Islam by the provision of religious education. Chronological reports provide that *Mullah* have actively contributed against the foreign invaders of the tribal regions and have provided leadership by provoking religious sentiments in people to wage religious war against them.³² *Mullah*, the priestly class becomes more vibrant in the times of considerable predicaments, usually against non-Muslims and embodies what is most national and sacred, else ways his role is monotonous.³³

Pashtuns having segmentary social structure are reluctant to concede their allegiance to the Pashtun leadership, therefore, Pashtun plunge readily under the leadership of *Mullah*, because they are not actually ceding their devotedness to *Mullah*, but to the Almighty Allah.³⁴ Subsequently, when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) invaded Afghanistan in

³¹ Ainslie Embree, *Pakistan Western Borderlands: The Transformation of a Political Order*, (Carolina, Carolina Academic Press, 1977), 77.

³² Akbar S. Ahmed, Mullah Mehdi, and Mosque: Emergent Trends in Muslim Society, (*Pluto Journals* 4, no. 1/2 (1982), 132-135.

³³ Huma I. Khan, *New Wine in Old Bottles: An Analysis of Pakistan's Conflict in the Pashtun Tribal Areas*, (Kansas, University of Kansas, 2008), 68.

³⁴ Shahida Aman, *Malik-Militancy Conundrum: Deciphering the Transitions in the traditional Pakhtun Leadership*, (Islamabad, Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, 2013), 6.

1978, the Mosque *Mullah* substituted the mystical saints to direct and wage *Jihad* against the external menace and subdued the local politics and social affairs³⁵ up till the advent of the US on the Afghan soil. The instability of the *Afghan Jihad* dismantled the legitimate political structures. Throughout the years, *Mullah* got financial independence and consolidated his role and gradually became more capable and powerful than *Malik*, *Sayyid* and *pir*. *Mullah* all over the period of *Afghan Jihad* sprang up as a counter hegemonic power to the hegemony of Political Agent, *Malik*, *Pir* and *Sayyid*. They got new resources and status and emerged on the political scene of North Waziristan.³⁶ However, in Afghanistan a new political group emerged in 1994 (Taliban) under the leadership of *Mullah* Muhammad Umar, *Mullah* Muhammad Rabbani, *Mullah* Abdul Razzaq and *Mullah* Borjan.³⁷ Taliban were more powerful, well organized and worked for a broader ideology.³⁸ Taliban, subsequently after the launch of the War on Terror infiltrated in North Waziristan, FATA and other parts of the country.

War on Terror and the Rise of Taliban

The US and NATO combined operation ‘Operation Enduring Freedom’ (OEF) in Afghanistan in 2001 ousted Taliban government in Afghanistan.

³⁵ James W. Spain, *The Way of the Pathans*, (London, Oxford University Press, 1962), 56-57.

³⁶ Robert L. Sammon, *Mullahs and Maliks: Understanding the Roots of Conflict in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas*, (Pennsylvania, University of Pennsylvania, 2008), 13.

³⁷ David Loyn, *Butcher and Bolt: Two Hundred Years of Foreign Engagement in Afghanistan*, (London, Hutchinson, 2008), 239-240.

³⁸ Lindsay Maizland & Zachary Laub, *The Taliban in Afghanistan*, (New York, Council on foreign Relations, 2020). <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/taliban-afghanistan>. (Accessed April 20, 2020).

Taliban and Al-Qaeda³⁹ members along with their leaders escaped to North Waziristan from the Eastern parts of Afghanistan. Afghan Taliban and foreigner terrorists could easily cross the long-drawn Pakistan and Afghanistan border, because from the time unknown people crisscross the border freely and easily.⁴⁰ They sweepingly unified, re-emerged in different groups and consolidated their power with the extended help of the local people under the parameters of Islam and *Pashtunwali*.⁴¹

The laws presented by FCR could not control the expansion of power and leverage of Taliban on the grounds that the people of North Waziristan are extremely free in their affairs and society is essentially regulated under the Pashtuns traditions and customs. “Beyond one hundred yards of the main Agency road, the laws and authority of the central government are replaced by traditions and customs”.⁴² Constraining Taliban and Al-Qaeda influence and to impede their cross border incursion, Pakistan launched ‘Operation *Al-Mizan*’⁴³ in FATA. Henceforth Taliban hostility drowned North Waziristan into bloodthirsty confrontations between security forces and

³⁹ Al-Qaeda is a militant Sunni Islamist multi-national organization founded in 1988 by Osama bin Laden, Abdullah Azzam, and several other Arab volunteers who fought against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s. (See Hassan Abbas, *The Taliban Revival: Violence and Extremism on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier*, (Wales, Gomer Press Ltd, 2014), 73.

⁴⁰ Maleeha Lodhi, ed. *Pakistan Beyond the Crisis State*, (London, C. Hurst & Co, 2011), 305-306.

⁴¹ Akbar Ahmed & Harrison Akins, *Waziristan: The Most Dangerous Place in the World*, (Doha, Aljazeera, 2013). <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/04/20134983149771365.html>. (Accessed April 20, 2020).

⁴² Akbar S. Ahmed, *Resistance and Control in Pakistan*, (New York, Routledge, 2004), 6.

⁴³ Pakistan started Operation Al-Mizan in FATA in 2002 by deploying 80,000 military and Paramilitary troops in the region. It was to carryout assaults against Al-Qaeda, Afghan and Pakistani Taliban and to secure PAK-Afghan border from their infiltration into Pakistan and Afghanistan and to curb their influence in the region. (see Sohail H. Tajik, *Analysis of Peace Agreements with Militants, and lessons for the Future*, (Islamabad, Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, 2011), 5.

Taliban. Attacks on check posts, Government offices and the abduction of the state employees and officials threatened the power, hegemony and sovereignty of the political administration. Eventually, the state's jurisdiction confined to the state's sheltered realm while cities and villages went under the supremacy of Taliban.⁴⁴ Terrorism in North Waziristan and the rest of the country in 2005-06 escalated. To maintain peace and stability the Pakistani government entered into peace deal with the Taliban. But it was problematic to convince dozens of Taliban factions on a table and to keep them withstand by the deals.

The deals could not affirm peace and security because most of the deals were not written and at the same time the foreigner terrorists were constantly seeking disruption of the deals. Most importantly, in contrast to the local tradition *Malik* and elders were not members of the deals, their job was exclusively pertinent to convince Taliban and Government for negotiations. Throughout the duration of the deals Taliban were free to kidnap, torture and slay the local people and in 2006, they imposed a strict version of *Shariah* law (Islamic law). The local people rebuffed Taliban by organizing *Lashkar* (civilian army); however, they were powerless in comparison to the long stretched and powerful organization of Taliban.⁴⁵

During dispersed and dreadful control of Taliban in the region, in 2007 around 40 Pakistani Taliban groups summarized *Therik-e-Taliban Pakistan*⁴⁶ (TTP), under the nominated leadership of Baitullah *Mehsud*.

⁴⁴ *Targeting Jirga: Top Administrator Killed in Waziristan Attack*, (Islamabad, The Express Tribune, 2012). <https://tribune.com.pk/story/349756/targeting-jirga-top-administrator-killed-in-waziristan-attack/>. Accessed April 23, 2020.

⁴⁵ Anatol Lieven, *Pakistan a Hard Country*, (Washington, Public Affairs, 2012), 428-429.

⁴⁶ "Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (Taliban Movement of Pakistan)", alternatively referred to as the Pakistani Taliban, is a terrorist group which is an umbrella organization of various

TTP being a counter hegemonic force, acknowledged the implementation of *Shariah* law in the country and to confront security forces as far as it is the part of the USA policies in the region.⁴⁷

Taliban: The Rulers of North Waziristan

From 2007 onwards, the Taliban commanded the socio-political and economic patterns of North Waziristan and emerged as “accidental guerilla”⁴⁸. Taliban recruited local peoples as fighters. They primarily initiated a gap of leadership and then aroused as a hegemonic political power. They manipulated *Jirga* and altered it with *Shariah* Council, that undertook to resolve conflicts and social affairs. Their arbitration was quick and inexpugnable, while according to the preexisting traditions and customs, resolution of some crucial issues would take months and in some cases years. Their decision power was forceful and brutal. They were not actually arbitrators but decision makers. Decision given by the *Shariah* Council used to be anyhow acceptable to the belligerent parties and if rebuffed, the rejecting party would face heavy fine and afflictions. People influenced by their decision power; rushed towards them for the solution of their issues. The decisions given by Taliban would usually be biased and based on corruption and required hefty amount for the fulfillment of illegal claims. The traditional *Jirga* lost its grace and excellency, because *Malik* were kept apolitical, prohibited from interacting with officials and more

Sunni Islamists militant groups based in the northwestern Federally Administered Tribal Area along the Afghan border in Pakistan. (see Maleeha Lodhi, *Pakistan Beyond the Crisis State*, (London, C. Hurst & Co, 2011), 126.

⁴⁷ Anatol Lieven, *Pakistan a Hard Country*, (Washington, Public Affairs, 2012), 429.

⁴⁸ Accidental Guerilla is the penetration of an insurgent group in an area of conflict. The insurgent group then align the population with itself and use it for violence. (See David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009), 185.

than 150 significant *Malik* were slaughtered till 2009 in North Waziristan and the rest had fled to safe and settled districts.⁴⁹

Taliban also repudiated the prevailing customs and traditions as morally deficient and misguided and substituted them with their version of *Shariah* law. “The Pashtuns tend to inhabit their own moral world, which is defined by Pashtunwali”.⁵⁰ People were terrified and were not capable to carry out the values of *Pashtunwali*. Conducive to hegemonic power, it was indispensable for Taliban to reshape the existing laws with their own. Usually, after Friday prayer *Fatwa*⁵¹ would be issued about any aspect of life and it would be followed silently. They outlawed beating *Dhol* (drum) in marriages, and in various areas watching television and listening to music was forbidden. They burnt all the CD cassette shops. They did not allow girls’ education and turned girls’ schools and colleges in their compounds. They introduced tax on shops and markets for the provision of security, though they were the ultimate threat to the people. They used to visit vehicle showrooms and inns in groups having their no specific identity for the collection of alms and *Zakat*⁵². The strategy of counter hegemony of Taliban was based on war of movement and therefore could not last longer.

⁴⁹ Muhammad A. Malik, Role of Malik in Tribal Society: A Dynamic Change After 9/11, (Peshawar, *Pakistan Annual Research Journal* 49, 2013), 105-107.

⁵⁰ Hugh Beattie, *Imperial Frontier: Tribe and State in Waziristan*, (London, Curzon Press, 2002), 65.

⁵¹ *Fatwa* is a vehicle for the transmission of legal knowledge, from its inception in theory to its assimilation in practice. (see Jakob S. Petersen, *A Typology of Fatwa*, (Copenhagen, Die welt Des Islams, 2015), 1-2.

⁵² Payment made annually under Islamic law on certain kinds of property and used for charitable and religious purposes, one of the five pillars of Islam. (see Imran A. Toor and Abu Nasar, *Zakat as a Social Safety Net: Exploring the Impact on Household Welfare in Pakistan*, (Lahore, Pakistan Economic and Social Review, 2004), 87-88.

Rationale Behind the Corrosion of Traditional Political Power

The subjugation of the traditional political power and hegemony of *Malik* and the political administration by the counter hegemony of Taliban did not vanish at a rate of knots. Various reasons were liable for the collapse of the predominant political system. The system needed a blow to test the failed administrative system, which was not tested before 9/11. Although North Waziristan is lagging the rest of the country in education, health care, job opportunities, industrial development, agricultural cultivation and there is augmentation in poverty.⁵³ However since 1980s, North Waziristan society is getting dynamism, and the modification has been producing counter forces to the pre-existing political power and the structure of governance. After the emergence of Pakistan, the region breathed a short breath of peace. During this time population increased, new avenues of business and trade discovered, Gulf migration explored, and new elites appeared on the political scene. These elites could manipulate the status of *Malik* and grew as a counter political force to *Malik*. Likewise, *Lungidars*.⁵⁴ and the embracement of more *Malik* in 1960s by General Ayub Khan under the Basic Democracy plan shrank the status of *Malik*.⁵⁵ Provision of the adult suffrage to the tribal areas in 1996 also dwindled the power and prestige of *Malik*, as previously voting right for the election of the National Assembly members was confined to *Malik*. In electing the National

⁵³ Syed I. Murshed, *Zarmena of Waziristan*, (Islamabad, The News, 2017). <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/208849-Zarmena-of-Waziristan>. (Accessed April 21,2020).

⁵⁴ *Malik* appointed by Political Agent with the approval of Governor of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) former North West Frontier Province (NWFP). (see Robert L. Sammon, *Mullahs and Maliks: Understanding the Roots of Conflict in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas*, (Pennsylvania, University of Pennsylvania, 2008), 51.

⁵⁵ Akbar S. Ahmed, *Social and Economic Changes in Tribal Areas, 1972-1976*, (Karachi, Oxford University Press, 1977), 45-48.

Assembly members, *Malik* were open to corruption while the adult suffrage impaired *Malik* supremacy over elections.⁵⁶ Similarly, state's allocated funds, jobs and construction contracts to North Waziristan through *Malik*; beyond the bounds of deserving and the rightful people.⁵⁷ Further, corruption had propelled all along into *Jirga*. Unnecessary continuity of an issue, monetary damages and discrimination of *Malik* correspondingly jeopardized the eminence of *Malik* and *Jirga*.

North Waziristan in the whole time of *Afghan Jihad* was indispensable for *Mujahidin* as it is integral for Taliban throughout the war against terrorism. *Afghan Jihad* had deep down impacts on North Waziristan, and it dismantled the predated social structures and assembled new hegemonic political power of *Mullah*. *Mullah* struck down the traditional political power of *Malik* while before the *Afghan Jihad*, *Mullah* was subservient to *Malik* and amid the *Afghan Jihad*, *Mullah* surrogated *Malik*. More than that *Afghan Jihad* imported *Kalashnikov culture* in North Waziristan and from end to end of the *Afghan Jihad* every individual had acquired an AK47. It yielded dispersed mobsters and *Malik* was their preferred target.

Again, FCR theoretically and practically was legislated for the realization of political preferences. It has obstructed the socio-political and economic advancement of the region. In consideration to the inception of Pakistan, no conducive diversification has been carried out in FCR other than minor alterations, which could preserve development of the people and the region.

⁵⁶ Altaf Ullah & Syed U. Hayat, The Recent Electoral Reforms in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA): An Appraisal, (*Lahore, Journal of Political Studies*, 2017), 353. *Gale Academic Onefile*, accessed 23 April. 202.

⁵⁷ Shahida Aman, *Malik-Militancy Conundrum: Deciphering the Transitions in the traditional Pakhtun Leadership*, (Islamabad, Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, 2013) 186.

FCR does not explore prosperity but restrains development. It is not applicable today as it was hundred years back due to global and regional advancements. Complication lies down in the implementation of the law. In North Waziristan not in the least FCR has been executed in its entirety beside the persistent use of its articles 21 and 24, which deals with the collective territorial responsibility. It has not been used for the betterment of the people.⁵⁸

National Action Plan and the Future of FATA

Peace, development, and comprehensive laws can guard the region from the peril of terrorism and counter hegemonic forces. It can be brought about by analyzing wide ranged policy guidelines and deep reforms in various state institutions as validated by NAP. NAP is the collective program of the federal and provincial governments and it embodies wide-ranging levels of enforcement and co-operation across the country's political and social spectrums. It is a composition of foreign and domestic policy indicatives, intended to eliminate terrorism from the country.⁵⁹

NAP has identified and demonstrated the fundamental causes of extremism and terrorism in the country in a plenary mechanism. In this vein, NAP has drawn extended objectives and “population centric security”⁶⁰ measurements, which have largely accomplished the set goals. Not only has terrorism deprecated to a greater extent, chances of it resurfacing with the

⁵⁸ Benjamin D. Hopkins, The Frontier Crimes Regulation and Frontier Governmentality, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 74, no.2 (2015), 371,375. Accessed 24 April 2020.

⁵⁹ Asad U. Khan, *National Action Plan: Achievements and Limitations*, (Islamabad, Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad, 2019), 1-3.

⁶⁰ Provision of human security to the population. (See, David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009), 213.

same force have also greatly diminished.⁶¹ Article 12 of NAP emphasizes administrative and developmental reforms in FATA and the immediate repatriation of the Internally Displaced People (IDPs). Accordingly, IDPs are rehabilitating and the National Assembly in 2018 extended constitutional supremacy to FATA and brought FATA to the mainstream politics by passing 25th constitutional amendment bill. This is a momentous step in the history of the region and will go a long way to address the problem of terrorism and political violence in not only FATA but also the rest of the country.

Furthermore, as rule of law, inclusive policies and democratic principles can effectuate the tribal belt on the course of peace and development, NAP appears to be laying out a road map for just such an accomplishment. Lastly, NAP has the potential to redress the socio-economic and political triad in FATA that was disturbed by the arrival of the Taliban. Putting the socio-political triad right, paves the way for a return to normalcy and a permanent solution to the problem of terrorism and political unrest in the region and beyond.

Conclusion

The war on terror and the resurgence of Afghan and foreign Taliban in North Waziristan and subsequently their confrontation with *Malik* and the security forces resulted in the destruction of the region and evolved as a counter hegemonic force. By utilizing Islam and *Pashtunwali* Taliban surfaced as the leaders and a hegemonic power in North Waziristan. They massacred the preeminent *Malik* and impaired *Malik* hegemony and the

⁶¹ Ibid., 5.

antecedent laws and customs and attempted to enforce *Shariah* law in the land. The far-reaching dominance of Taliban in the area was predominantly because of the shortcomings in the state law, the fallibilities in the potential and prominence of *Malik* and state's jurisdictions. The society has been modifying and advancing and the laws of FCR and the prejudiced presentation of *Malik* are not employable straightaway. NAP in this regard provides objectives and extensive reforms in various state institutions. Institutional reforms, supremacy of law, peace and democratic values can salvage the region from destruction and calamities and above all the counter hegemonic forces.

Hakim Muhammad is a graduate in Pakistan Studies from Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad. He can be reached at [**hmdnashtar@gmail.com**](mailto:hmdnashtar@gmail.com).

A Study of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) Social Media Communication: Major Trends, Key Themes and Propaganda Appeals

Saif ur Rehman Tahir

Abstract

Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is one of the most potent and deadliest terrorist organization in Pakistan¹. As respite to ongoing state operations, TTP has assumed active presence on social media to propagate its ideology and to recruit followers. This study offers an exclusive insight into the world of TTP online communication; examining major trends, key themes and propaganda appeals by analyzing TTP propaganda videos shared from Nov 2017-April 2020 on its official channel 'Umar Media'. As applied discourse, the major aim of the study is founded in deconstructing online communication strategies of TTP by scrutinizing content and form of its messages that are portraying a negative view of Pakistan in the war against terror. The study found that TTP uses various propaganda techniques such as *Plain Folks*, *Testimonials*, *Bandwagon*, *Card stacking* and *Name calling* in its online content.

Keywords: Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, Propaganda Video, Social Media, TTP Narratives.

¹ "Pakistan's threat landscape in 2019", *The News International*, January 1, 2020.

Introduction

Social media is a recent phenomenon in Pakistan that has gained mass approval in limited time. Primarily used as a substitute for traditional communication, its role as alternative information medium is now popular for free access and sharing of information and a knowledge resource for the masses. Despite its utility as an unfiltered space for public opinion, social media has emerged as a challenge for governments worldwide after terrorist organizations adopted the platform to mass spread their narratives and to recruit prospective militants². For Pakistan, the perils of free access and unrestrained content materialized in the form of online radicalization that professedly instigated in 2015 and is now aiming at the educated urban middleclass³. In May 2017, interview of ‘Naureen Leghari’ wobbled the media spectrum of Pakistan. ‘*A medical student radicalized online to join extremists*’, run the headlines, contrary to her account that did not appear of an extremist who agreed to join the call of presumed Jihad⁴. Naureen’s case is amongst the maiden events of online radicalization in Pakistan and a tragic chronicle of a prospective terrorist whose alleged perception is now outwardly penetrating the urban youth. In parallel terrorist events of ‘*Safoora Goth*’ Karachi, the target killing of ‘*Sabeen Mahmud*’, a prominent woman activist and the arrest of Pakistani-American ‘*Faisal Shahzad*’ in 2010 Time Square bombing case⁵; involvement of Pakistani youth from

²Kalev Leetaru, “Can We Finally Stop Terrorists from Exploiting Social Media?” *Forbes* (October 2018).

³Sara Mahmood, “Pakistan’s Women Jihadis, Understanding the nexus between women and terrorism in Pakistan”, *The Diplomat*, April 6, 2017.

⁴Daily Times (2017, May 11). Retrieved from <https://dailytimes.com.pk/12187/noreen-blames-social-media-for-her-radicalisation/>

⁵Farhan Zahid, “TTPs future under the leadership of new emir Noor wali Mehsud”, James Town Terrorism monitor, Volume 17 Issue 10 (May 2019). Retrieved from

prominent educational institutes stipulates that the menace has fared to establish footholds in the region⁶. The surfacing of TTP and affiliated terror groups in urban areas of Punjab and Sindh with accomplices in educational campuses and professional groups reveals that the online radicalization has mutated into an intricate phenomenon with extensive reach⁷. Whilst, the phenomenon of online radicalization is not novel and accounted customarily in west, it now find associates in Pakistan as growing, technology sophisticated and complex nexus of terrorist groups with well-crafted message and platform of wide digital audience whose target is every youth of 15-31 years, that constitutes 29% of the country⁸.

Social media and Extremism

Social media has revolutionized the world of communication. Its various interactive platforms deliver greater appeal and wider audience. ‘YouTube’ as a popular video sharing website is swelling with 1 billion users every month. Likewise, ‘Twitter’ in 2014 had on average 350,000 tweets per minute and 500 million tweets every day that has now doubled; whilst Facebook remained the largest social network with 2.27 *billion* monthly active users⁹. Due to mass broadcast and wider acceptance, social media emerged as a potential site for terrorist organizations to accomplish their ominous agendas. In past few years, successful online propaganda by various global extremist groups had influenced various social segments

<https://jamestown.org/program/ttps-future-under-the-leadership-of-new-emir-noor-wali-mehsud/>

⁶ Atika Rehman, “From IBA graduate to terror suspect”, Dawn, May 21, 2015.

⁷ Huma Yusuf, “University Radicalization: Pakistan’s Next Counterterrorism Challenge”, *CTC Centinal*, Volume 9 issue 2 (February 2016).

⁸ Human Development in Pakistan, UNDP report (2018).

⁹ “Social media by the numbers”, Omnicore, July, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.omnicoreagency.com/youtube-statistics>.

including non-Muslims from the west. Attacks in Manchester and Barcelona in 2017 and recent lone-wolf attacks in UK, US and Canada by their respective citizens are glaring examples of the effective extremist propaganda that has attracted thousands of recruits from EU and North America; claiming Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan the “choice for generations of extremism”¹⁰.

Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)

After 9/11 and the subsequent dissolution of Taliban government in Kabul by US invasion, TTP emerged as a satellite organization of Tehreek-e-Taliban Afghanistan in adjoining border areas of Pakistan where the renegade Afghan Taliban commanders and associates took refuge and established a local chapter¹¹. Focused initially on Afghanistan, TTP amplified activities in Pakistan under the leadership of Baitullah Mehsud that maintained close association with Afghan Taliban¹². However, unlike Afghan counterparts, TTP fixated efforts against Pakistani state and the law enforcement agencies. Prior to military operations against militants in tribal districts, TTP maintained its presence in erstwhile FATA and other parts of the country¹³. The mass approval of social media influenced TTP to engage in the medium. Consequently ‘Umar Media’, the official media platform of

¹⁰ Imran Awan, “Cyber-Extremism: Isis and the Power of Social Media” (2017).

¹¹ Michael Semple, “THE PAKISTAN TALIBAN MOVEMENT: AN APPRAISAL”, Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation and Social Justice Queen's University, Belfast (2012). Retrieved from [file:///C:/Users/A%20S%20Computer/Downloads/65-82 THE+PAKISTAN+TALIBAN+MOVEMENT-+AN+APPRAISAL.pdf](file:///C:/Users/A%20S%20Computer/Downloads/65-82%20THE+PAKISTAN+TALIBAN+MOVEMENT-+AN+APPRAISAL.pdf)

¹² TTP Umar Media, “Ibtal ummat 3”, April 13, 2020. Video File. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/abtalalumah3en>

¹³ “CTD arrests key commanders of TTP”, *Sama News*, January 2019, retrieved from <https://www.samaa.tv/news/2019/01/ctd-arrests-key-commander-of-ttp-fazlullah-group-in-karachi/>.

TTP was launched in September 2012. While managing frequent blockage and deletion of accounts, the organization still upholds a significant presence on social media. Precise text and swift sharing options of twitter provided an edge to the Taliban stimulus. By engaging on various platforms, TTP is trying to maintain an online presence, however it remains defeated at levels by the Pakistani state¹⁴. The online presence of extremist organizations and the increasing cases of online radicalization in other parts of the world raises the question as to what extent can TTP and other such organization's radical propaganda sway Pakistani youth in coming years.

In light of dissemination of anti-state content and massive outreach by extremist organizations to recruit, attack state, its peoples and aggressively spread their narrative; the aim of this research is to study the possibly generated online discourses of TTP. Most work in this regard is strategic and carried out with certain prejudice in the west; this paper will add a de-westernized approach to this mayhem and give scholars/policymakers an insight in the world of Taliban online propaganda. Research findings will assist in identifying deficiencies and filling gaps in Pakistan's collective approach towards countering extremist narrative that has relied exclusively on theoretical spheres.

Methodology

This study is guided by three interrelated research questions:

- 1) What are the major online trends of TTP?
- 2) What are the key themes of TTP content?
- 3) What propaganda appeals are promoted by TTP?

¹⁴ Thomas H. Johnson, "The Taliban's Use of the Internet, Social Media Video, Radio Stations, and Graffiti", *Oxford University Press* (2019).

TTP videos posted on ‘Umar Media’ serve the foundation for this study. Discourse Analysis has been incorporated to analyze a total of 18 propaganda videos of 5 hours and 23 minutes from **October 2017 to April 2020**. The videos are mostly retrieved from www.Jihadology.net, an online repository of extremist videos and tweets. The particular time frame was selected for the reason that TTP propaganda content and videos had been the highest in the time period. Grounded theory was used in categorizing and streamlining the prominent themes and propaganda appeals. Grounded theory involves the progressive identification and integration of categories of meaning from Data. Grounded theory is defined as ‘The theory that is derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process’¹⁵. The purpose of this approach is to generate theory from data”¹⁶. Grounded theory as a method provides guidelines on how to identify categories, how to make links between categories and to establish relationships between them. Constant comparative method was incorporated in which all visual content was examined comprehensively for three times.¹⁷ Once the categories were identified, the content was placed accordingly. Following five themes have been identified:

- a) *Pakistani state-a paid US mercenary* covered TTP visuals that conveyed destruction and mortification of Islam and Muslims by hands of Pakistani establishment on behest of west and the United States.

¹⁵ J.M Corbin, A.Strauss, “A. Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria”, *Qual Sociol* **13**, 3–21 (1990). <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00988593>

¹⁶ K. F Punch, “Introduction to social research: Quantitative and qualitative approaches”, *Sage* (2013).

¹⁷ A. Bryant and Charmaz, “The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory”, *Sage Publications* (2007).

- b) *TTP, the real patrons of Islam* covered the visuals showing Islamic rulings for Jihad along with religious teachings for Qital (holy war), that were used as baseline by TTP to wage war against state of Pakistan and justify their heinous acts.
- c) *TTP, the harbingers of change* covered TTP visuals that exhibited failure of democracy to answer the state atrocities and global disparities and displayed TTP as sole organization that can bring peace.
- d) *TTP, the Liberators* covered visuals that displayed TTP as savior and liberator to various ethnic groups struggling in Pakistan.
- e) *One Ummah, One Force* covered the TTP visuals that portrayed Taliban movement as a global movement and initiator of worldwide Jihad, calling global Islamic militant groups to join the ranks against their common enemy Pakistan.

As devised by Institute of propaganda analysis¹⁸, the visuals have been categorized into following propaganda appeals:

- i. *Plain folks* covered visuals that represented TTP militants as common citizens striving to enforce shariah in Pakistan.
- ii. *Testimonials* referred to statements of religious/social notables calling people to join the struggle of TTP.
- iii. *Bandwagon* covered visuals that conveyed that people of all ranks and creed are joining TTP as it is striving to enforce Islam in Pakistan and the world.

¹⁸ Qualter, H. "Propaganda Teorisi ve Propagandanın Gelişimi", Çev. Ünsal Oskay, A.Ü. SBF Dergisi (35 /1),Ankara, (s. 255-307), (1980).

- iv. *Card stacking* referred to glittering visuals of TTP that highlighted TTP struggle and success against Pakistani state, overlooking views that doubts their ideologue and operational methods.
- v. *Transference* referred to visuals screening moral and operational support to TTP cause.
- vi. *Name calling* consists of visuals encompassing visual and vocal slurs that instigate emotional appeal for TTP and hatred for Pakistan and its law enforcement agencies.
- vii. *Glittering generalities* referred to visuals that depicted positive self-portrayal of TTP by using widespread concepts.

TTP Online Trends

Language and Target Audience

Table 1.1 cited below elucidates the breakdown of language in TTP videos. From Table 1.1, it is manifested that majority 26 percent of the content comprised of Arabic nasheeds (hymns), followed by Pashto speech 20 percent, Pashto nasheed 19 percent, Urdu Speech 19 percent, English Speech 8 percent, Urdu nasheed 5 percent, Arabic speech 2 percent and Balochi Speech 1 percent.

Table 1.1: Language Breakdown of TTP Videos

URDU NASHEED	URDU SPEECH	PASHTO NASHEED	PASHTO SPEECH	ARABIC NASHEED	ARABIC SPEECH	BALOCHI SPEECH	ENGLISH SPEECH
5% (18m)	19% (62m)	19% (62m)	20% (64m)	26% (84m)	2% (7m)	1% (2m)	8% (25m)

The figures indicate that the majority content comprised of Arabic religious hymns that is meant to instigate Muslim emotions globally. The apparent

target audience are fleeing insurgents from Syria and Iraq where Daesh and various factions are on the retreat after US operation and are spotting space in this region¹⁹. The premise is supported by invitations to global Islamic militant organizations by TTP leadership in the videos where they are calling militants in Syria especially the Arab fighters to join/support their cause against Pakistan²⁰. After Arabic, majority Pashto content reveals that TTP's potential target audience in Pakistan are Pashtun community from erstwhile FATA. In majority visual content of TTP, North Waziristan is mentioned and is declared as the ideological and training hub of TTP. It is pertinent to mention that Balochi Language is a recent trend observed in TTP videos. Despite negligible volume (1 percent), it submits that TTP is struggling to establish presence in Balochistan that is evident by TTP claims of Balochistan as their next battlefield²¹. Recent surge of TTP attacks in Balochistan is substantiation of the fact that in response to successful operations by Pakistani law enforcement agencies in erstwhile FATA, TTP has relocated its setup and is establishing footholds in Balochistan.²².

Content Composition

Table 1.2 placed below details the TTP visual content composition. The visuals are sorted into following categories: *Threats*, *State Atrocities*,

¹⁹ Kamaljit Kaur Sandhu, "Islamic State is relocating to Afghanistan; it's threat for India too", *India Today*, November 14, 2019.

²⁰ TTP Umar Media, "(Fatarbisu) New message from TTP; Then Wait #2", February 4, 2018. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

²¹ TTP Umar Media, "New message from TTP; Healing Balochistan", Dec 16, 2016. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

²² Zia ur Rehman, "Pakistani Taliban: Between infighting, government crackdowns and Daesh", TRT World, 18 April, 2019. Retrieved online from <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/pakistani-taliban-between-infighting-government-crackdowns-and-daesh-25976>

Combat/achievement, Training, Tribute to their fighters and Message to people.

Table 1.2 : Content Composition of the Visuals

THREAT	STATE ATROCITIES	COMBAT/ ACHIEVEMENT	TRAINING	TRIBUTE TO MARTYRS	MESSAGE TO PEOPLE
2% (5m)	13% (43m)	20% (64m)	21% (70m)	28% (91m)	16% (54m)

Research reveals that majority 28 percent visual content comprised of visuals symbolizing tribute to TTP fighters followed by training of TTP militants 21 percent and combat/achievements 20 percent. Results disprove the prevailing general premise that majority online extremist content comprised of radical religious instructions that sway people towards their narratives. The data articulates that combat visuals in TTP online content boast the life of common TTP militant through rough drills and combat visuals; transmitting a thrilling and powerful life to a person watching from comport of his house²³. This increases emotional empathy and a strong urge amongst common viewer to feel similar effect in-person by joining TTP.

Prominent Themes

Pakistani state --a Paid US Mercenary

Amongst primary arguments of TTP is the portrayal of the state of Pakistan and its leaders as US mercenaries and paid killers²⁴. TTP leadership reiterated this narrative online and called destruction of Pakistan as a success against United States, the supreme enemy of Islam²⁵. To establish the

²³ Hassan Hassan and Michael Weiss, "ISIS, Inside the army of Terror", Regan Arts (2015).

²⁴ TTP Umar Media, "New message from TTP; Healing Balochistan", Dec 16, 2016. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

²⁵ Ibid

argument, incidents of '*Jamia Hafsa*', forced kidnapping of civilians and APS carnage 2014 were dramatized in TTP visuals to instigate emotional appeal by associating all bedlam with Pakistani law enforcement agencies²⁶. This narrative is reinforced by screening interviews of TTP militants who proclaim the war of terror as war against Islam.²⁷

Likewise, visuals of media fiascos and political statements had been churned to testify TTP stance²⁸. To confine mainstream media narrative against TTP mayhems, Pakistani media had been condemned austerely on various occasions in the visuals. Media as coconspirator of Pakistani state is listed as *Taghoti Taqat* (Forces of evil) and accomplice of *Dajjal* (anti-Christ); inferring auxiliary attacks on media personals and channels to bar their support for Pakistani law enforcement agencies²⁹.

Another argument cascaded by TTP to visualize state of Pakistan as western ally is the assertion of failure of Pakistani state to implement Islam at the national level. To TTP, since Pakistan was founded in the name of Islam, the present administration as western puppet has lost the integrity through anti-Islam activities i.e by selling a Muslim daughter *Afia Siddiqui* to US³⁰; hence TTP pleaded justification to dislodge such governance by force. A *fatwa* (religious doctrine) in this regard had been issued by TTP on 21st

²⁶ TTP Umar Media, "New message from TTP; Message to Pakistan Army", Dec 24, 2017. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

²⁷ TTP Umar Media, "(Fatarbisu) New message from TTP; Then Wait #2", February 4, 2018. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

²⁸ TTP Umar Media, "(Fatarbisu) New message from TTP; Then Wait #2", February 4, 2018. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

²⁹ TTP Umar Media, "(Ibtal Ummat) New message from TTP; Champions of the Nation #2", Feb 14, 2018. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

³⁰ TTP Umar Media, "(Fatarbisu) New message from TTP; Then Wait #2", February 4, 2018. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

November 2018, debasing actions of Pakistani law enforcement agencies and justifying their eradication. Henceforth, fighting alongside TTP against Pakistani state and law enforcement agencies was revered as the most favored act, rewarded in this world and hereafter³¹.

TTP: The Real Patrons of Islam

Religion stands prime in TTP ideologue. Proclaiming a *shariah* backed narrative, TTP visuals commenced with couplets from ‘*Surah Anfal*’, ‘*Surah Tauba*’ and ‘*Surah Muhammad*’, Qur’anic chapters comprising the orders of *Qital*³². Each time TTP cascade an operation against Pakistani forces, militants were shown engaged in prayers that rendered them righteous and followers of the straight path³³. Likewise, to align their militant activities with Islamic teachings, TTP had shown its leaders accompanied with notable Islamic scholars, crafting a validation to join their cause for its majority viewers of erstwhile FATA that hold a strong religious inclinations³⁴. In order to boost the morale of its militants and sympathizers, Umar media videos on various occasions equated its operations to initial Islamic battles of ‘*Badr*’ and ‘*Auhd*’, to scheme the scuffle against Pakistani law enforcement agencies as a battle of Islam and *Kufr* (infidels)³⁵. TTP followers and militants were revered with terms such as *Ghazian* (the

³¹ TTP, “New Fatwa from TTP about surrender”, *Jihadology.net*, November 21, 2018. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/2018/11/21/new-fatwa-from-the-te%e1%b8%a5rik-i-%e1%b9%adaliban-pakistan-about-surrenders/>

³² “A war fought by Muslims to foil a threat from non-Muslims with a reasonable force at their disposal”. Zamir Akhtar Khan “CONCEPT OF JIHAD IN ISLAM (An Analytical Study in the Light of the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet)” (2012).

³³TTP Umar Media, “(Ibtal Ummat) New message from TTP; Champions of the Nation #2”, Feb 14, 2018. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ TTP Umar Media, “Al Sabiqoon 2”, Feb 11, 2019. Video File. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/AsSabiqoonHD2>

victors), *Fedayeen* (those who sacrifice themselves in the way of Allah), and *Ibtal Ummat* (hero of the nation); religious anthems/hymns in this regard are fervently incorporated in propaganda videos to complement TTP militants with an esteemed status in the struggle of implementing Islam in the region³⁶.

In order to justify the killing of Muslims in their attacks, Islamic rulings in distort had been fused in TTP visuals where Pakistani soldiers and officials are labelled as *Murtads* (apostates), involved in killings of Muslim women and children³⁷; hence are liable to be killed at all costs. TTP justified above acts with statements such as “*Due to evident atrocities by Pakistani state, need for declaring Jihad has ended; Qital has ruled out all other options including democracy that has and will not establish Islamic regime in the country*”³⁸, therefore all sacrifices are justified to win the battle; as marked by a TTP video title ‘*Hatta latakun Fitna*’ (till the chaos ends)³⁹.

To establish itself as the real patrons of Islam, TTP in its majority online communication had endured *Khilafat*⁴⁰ (*Caliphate*) as a viable system, associated with early zenith of Islam. TTP vows to establish same *emirate*

³⁶Ibid

³⁷ TTP Umar Media, “New message from TTP; Healing Balochistan”, Dec 16, 2016. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

³⁸ TTP Umar Media, “New message from TTP; Healing Balochistan #2”, March 29, 2018. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

³⁹ TTP Umar Media, “New video message from TTP Abu Mansur Asim Mehsud about the messages of condolence and congratulations sent by the leaders of the Islamic Jihad on occasion of the Martyrdom of the Mawlawi Fadl Allah Kharasani and the petition to the Jihadi leaders to unite the blessed Jihadi ranks”, Oct 8, 2018. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

⁴⁰ A caliphate is an Islamic state under the leadership of an Islamic steward with the title of caliph, a person considered a politico-religious successor to the Islamic prophet Muhammad and a leader of the entire Ummah (Muslim community). “The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought.”

(kingdom) in the region and has named its leader *Amir-ul-Momineen* (the ruler of the devout). Hence, combat against Pakistani forces is established as a struggle towards establishing *Khilafat* and a vital element of its core principle i.e. ‘*Amar-bil-Marooif*’ (calling towards the righteous)⁴¹. Associated with notion of *Khilafat* is the allegory of ‘Black Flag’, incorporated widely in TTP visuals in the form of black clothes, flags and turbans⁴². The TTP uses certain Ahadiths that it has picked out of context regarding the end of times in order to propagate its image as the pattern of Islam⁴³.

TTP, the Harbingers of Peace

A premise broadly narrated in TTP online communication and visuals is the sweeping failure of democracy as a system to address global mayhems, primarily in Pakistan where political leaders have allied with West in annihilation of Pashtuns and Balochs⁴⁴. Therefore, to TTP, shariah sights the only solution that can transform the existing system of oppression and can bring peace to prevalent chaos. The proposition is affirmed by reference to work of Egyptian and Arab religious scholars in TTP visuals alongside testimonials and reference of renowned scholars from Pakistan and India.

Contrary to TTPs general perception as slayers and terrorists, their online content offered a divergent perspective of the organization as forerunners of

⁴¹ TTP Umar Media, “(Fatarbisu) New message from TTP; Then Wait #2”, February 4, 2018. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

⁴² TTP Umar Media, “New message from TTP; Message to Pakistan Army”, Dec 24, 2017. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

⁴³ TTP Umar Media, “Al Mueddoon”, November 24, 2018. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/MMARAIMueddoon2ISG>

⁴⁴ TTP Umar Media, “(Fatarbisu) New message from TTP; Then Wait #2”, February 4, 2018. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>.

peace and human rights. Likewise, to dissuade TTP's adverse perception in Army Public School attack 2014, TTP militants are shown avoiding attacks on innocent civilians, valuing human lives in combat. On one occasion, TTP leadership during APS attack had been shown instructing its commander to save the lives of children and attack only the security officials.⁴⁵ However, after the carnage ended, 149 people including 132 children were killed and the massacre turned out the worst terrorist attack in the history of Pakistan⁴⁶.

TTP, the Liberators

In past few years, insurgency in Balochistan had been sparked on social media by various disgruntled elements⁴⁷. The matter has now transformed into prime agenda of TTP who views Balochistan as its 'New Battlefield'⁴⁸, promising support to local fighters with statements such as '*We will protect you all, you should stay away from the government and support us as we are you*'⁴⁹. To craft an emotional appeal, visuals of families of missing Balochs had been incorporated in the videos along with statements of local TTP leadership accusing state for atrocities on locals; calling all Balochs to join their struggle against Pakistan⁵⁰. Altered visuals screening the alleged

⁴⁵ TTP Umar Media, "(Ibtal Ummat) New message from TTP; Champions of the Nation #2", Feb 14, 2018. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>.

⁴⁶ BBC, "Pakistan Taliban: Peshawar school attack leaves 141 dead". 16 December 2014. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-30491435>

⁴⁷ "Pakistani security forces kill 2 Baloch graduates, who were forced to join BLA, in Kalat", ANI News, May 3, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.aninews.in/news/world/asia/pakistani-security-forces-kill-2-baloch-graduates-who-were-forced-to-join-bla-in-kalat20200503202255/>

⁴⁸ TTP Umar Media, "New message from TTP; Healing Balochistan #2", March 29, 2018. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

⁴⁹ TTP Umar Media, "New message from TTP; Healing Balochistan", Dec 16, 2016. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

⁵⁰ Ibid

mistreatment of Baloch and Pashtun youth by law enforcement agencies had been incorporated widely to second the narrative⁵¹.

As a way of salvation to Baloch and Pashtun sufferings, TTP visuals as liberators offered redemption through online tutorials of IED making⁵² along with vivid exhibition of TTP training centers in Balochistan where guerrilla and weapon training is provided to Balochs and Pashtuns to avenge their mistreatment from state of Pakistan⁵³. To exploit the prevalent perception of a neglected faction in Baloch youth, TTP visuals had incorporated visuals where its leadership is shown embracing Baloch locals and elders, visualizing establishment of a just society based on Islamic principles of unity without creed⁵⁴. Startlingly, there is no mentioning of ethnic Hazara community from Balochistan in the visuals that stayed under wrath of TTP due to sectarian motives⁵⁵.

TTP's appeal as liberator did not limit to Baloch and Pashtun factions, TTP has now fixated its efforts on Urdu speaking community in Sindh. In most of recently published videos of Umar media, Urdu nasheeds (hymns) were incorporated based on *Jamaat-e-Islami* religious hymn/songs from 80s that are still common in Urdu speaking community of Karachi. These hymns had been used to attract commoners of the Urdu speaking community of Sindh suffering an identity crisis and economic turmoil in scuffle with other

⁵¹ TTP Umar Media, "New message from TTP; Healing Balochistan #2", March 29, 2018. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

⁵² TTP Umar Media, "New message from TTP; Healing Balochistan", Dec 16, 2016. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ TTP Umar Media, "New message from TTP; Healing Balochistan #2", March 29, 2018. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

⁵⁵ TTP Umar Media, "(Ibtal Ummat) New message from TTP; Champions of the Nation #2", Feb 14, 2018. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

ethnicities by calling TTP as their saviors. A widely used lyric in visuals state “*Guftar bhi hai, Kirdar bhi hai, hum haq k alambardar bhi hain* (we have the ideologue and the character and are the torch bearers of the truth) inciting the urban Urdu speaking commoners to join the cause of TTP⁵⁶.

One Ummah One Force:

Most TTP visuals posted before 2017 were in Pashto/Urdu followed by English subtitles. Owing to varying strategic environment and potential influx of IS and Arab fighters in South Asia⁵⁷, TTP online narrative now comprised of Arabic speech along with citing of Arab militant leaders. Refuting conventional borders as factitious⁵⁸ and calling a strong cooperation of global Islamic militant organizations, Mufti Abu Mansoor, a ranking TTP leader in his October 28th speech appealed all to unite as *Ummah* (nation) against Pakistan⁵⁹, responsible for destruction of Muslims in Syria, Iraq, Palestine and Afghanistan⁶⁰. Hence all global Islamic extremism organization pursuing supposed jihad were invited by TTP, the

⁵⁶ TTP Umar Media, “(Hata la takun fitna) New message from TTP; Until there is no discord #3”, Apr 13, 2018. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

⁵⁷ Nancy Youssef, “U.S. Fights an Islamic State Rise in Afghanistan”, *Wall Street Journal*, 26 December, 2019.

⁵⁸ TTP Umar Media, “Ibtal ummat 3”, April 13, 2020. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/abtalalumah3en>

⁵⁹ TTP Umar Media, “New video message from TTP Abu Mansur Asim Mehsud about the messages of condolence and congratulations sent by the leaders of the Islamic Jihad on occasion of the Martyrdom of the Mawlawi Fadl allah Kharasani and the petition to the Jihadi leaders to unite the blessed Jihadi ranks”, Oct 8, 2018. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

⁶⁰ TTP Umar Media, “(Fatarbisu) New message from TTP; Then Wait #2”, February 4, 2018. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

‘Pioneers of Jihad’⁶¹ to join/strengthen them as one force for real Jihad against state of Pakistan, the arch enemy of Islam⁶².

To establish TTP as a sturdy force able to take spiteful enemies of Islam, Umar media visuals displayed modern weaponry, advanced training grounds and more technical support. The recent TTP visuals are incorporating real time battle scenes and night attacks using advance night vision providing a first-person shooter experience to idle youth, exciting them to join the real theater of war with commitment of saving *Muslim Ummah*⁶³. Parallel visual strategy had been successfully embraced by IS to recruit the youth worldwide and is now incorporated by TTP and other sub nationalist militant organizations in the region.

Propaganda Appeals

Plain folks

Plain folks technique convinces the audience that “*public figures or groups they represent are not professionals but just plain folks*”⁶⁴. In TTP visuals, this technique is furnished often. To connect with their conformist viewers in erstwhile FATA, religion is used as bate in the visuals. TTP militants are featured as ordinary tribal Muslim who stood against the state brutalities and anti-Islam actions. To further prompt the viewers, life history of TTP suicide

⁶¹ TTP Umar Media, “(Ibtal Ummat) New message from TTP; Champions of the Nation #2”, Feb 14, 2018. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

⁶² TTP Umar Media, “(Hata la takun fitna) New message from TTP; Until there is no discord #2”, Oct 21, 2018. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

⁶³ TTP Umar Media, “(Fatarbisu) New message from TTP; Then Wait #2”, February 4, 2018. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

⁶⁴ Qualter, H. “Propaganda Teorisi ve Propagandanın Gelişimi”, Çev. Ünsal Oskay, A.Ü. SBF Dergisi (35 /1),Ankara, (s. 255-307), (1980).

bombers had been graphically illustrated. For instance, in the life story of *Waheed Ullah*⁶⁵, the suicide bomber from Swat, TTP visual elucidate him as an ordinary youth who joined TTP and reached the prestigious position of *Fedayeen*. Due to his highest actions that are revered in the world and hereafter, he stands a role model in TTP even after his death. The visuals described the life of Waheed ullah as a common man who was raised in a village in Swat. The urge of joining the ranks of *fedayeen* and to answer state atrocities against locals and Islam made him join the ranks of TTP. Through many similar stories in visuals, TTP marked itself as organization of common men that had been hassled by Pakistani state because of their religion. Henceforth by instilling this appeal, TTP called all Muslim youth to join them against state atrocities as they are one of their own and avenge martyred Muslim brethren.

Testimonial

Testimonial is a propaganda device in which “*well-known individuals/celebrities tell others why they should buy a product or join a campaign*”⁶⁶. TTP as ardent admirers of propaganda had repeatedly adopted this technique by using cheery picked, out of context statements, testimonials and references of religious scholars and former state officials. On various occasions, TTP leaders and militants can be seen with re-known religious scholars. Also, visuals of notable religious scholars such as the projection and propagation by TTP that certain religious scholars endorse them. The terrorist group also shows its allegiance by naming its operations

⁶⁵TTP Umar Media, “(Fatarbisu) New message from TTP; Then Wait #2”, February 4, 2018. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

⁶⁶ Qualter, H. “Propaganda Teorisi ve Propagandanın Gelişimi”, Çev. Ünsal Oskay, A.Ü. SBF Dergisi (35 /1),Ankara, (s. 255-307), (1980).

after certain Islamic scholars. TTP had made a tactical display of testimonials as an effective propaganda device. In recent months, TTP has extended range of testimonials from religious authorities to mainstream media anchors, political leaders and former state officials. TTP is underlining media statements to craft anti state emotional appeal amongst the masses. For instance, in TTP visuals, clips of media anchors had been shown criticizing the state for action against Muslims and Pashtuns in Afghanistan and tribal districts by acting on behest of the United States⁶⁷. These statements as testimonials stand prominent in inclination and radicalization of educated youth towards the extremist narrative.

Bandwagon

It is a technique in which “*propagandists try to convince audience that it is almost too late to take advantage of the offer, to join the organization, to follow the fad,—to get on the bandwagon*”⁶⁸. TTP seems fervent in implying this technique in their visuals. Most Umar media videos depicted TTP as an emerging and popular military might that is employing advanced weaponry and tactics against Pakistani security forces⁶⁹. Visuals rendered that with increasing popularity of TTP, majority tribals from erstwhile FATA, Balochs and Pashtuns from Balochistan have joined the organization and are driving others to join the ranks. The visuals propagate TTP spread from

⁶⁷ TTP Umar Media, “(Ibtal Ummat) New message from TTP; Champions of the Nation #2”, Feb 14, 2018. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

⁶⁸ Qualter, H. “Propaganda Teorisi ve Propagandanın Gelişimi”, Çev. Ünsal Oskay, A.Ü. SBF Dergisi (35 /1),Ankara, (s. 255-307), (1980).

⁶⁹ TTP Umar Media, “(Hata la takun fitna) New message from TTP; Until there is no discord #3”, Apr 13, 2018. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

erstwhile FATA to Balochistan as ideological and tactical victory⁷⁰. This rhetoric engenders success of TTP ideologue and creates an appeal for commoners to join TTP since according to them majority communities and various segments of society have either joined or are supporting the organization.

Card Stacking:

It is the most vividly featured propaganda technique in TTP visuals. The technique asserts on “*Building an overwhelming case on one side of an issue while concealing another, perhaps equally persuasive*”⁷¹ Unlike the general perception as terrorist organization, TTP reveals an exalting picture of the organization and its accomplishments on the social media. However, contrary to its projected portrayal as forerunners of peace for children and prisoners, TTP apparent activities and attacks resulted in colossal fatalities of hundreds of innocent civilians in the past decade including the Army Public School attack of 2014 in which 134 children were killed⁷². Owing to their brutal acts, Tehreek-e-Taliban Afghanistan, their parent organization have condemned their actions on various occasions and severed relations with them⁷³.

In most of TTP visuals, enactment of Islam had been used as an excuse of their violent activities. As sheer display of card stacking, Qur’anic teachings are amenably recited in Umar visuals, illustrating TTP as forerunners of

⁷⁰ TTP Umar Media, “(Ibtal Ummat) New message from TTP; Champions of the Nation #2”, Feb 14, 2018. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² BBC, “Pakistan Taliban: Peshawar school attack leaves 141 dead”. 16 December 2014. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-30491435>

⁷³ “Afghan Taliban condemn Peshawar school attack”, *Dawn*, December 17, 2014. Retrieved from <https://www.dawn.com/news/1151407/afghan-taliban-condemn-peshawar-school-attack>

Islam. TTP militants are depicted performing the supreme act of jihad against key western ally and enemy of Islam and the narrative is authenticated by religious references/statements of notable religious scholars⁷⁴. However, it was TTP's churning of Islamic teachings and barbaric actions that compelled locals, clergy and the state to revolt against their activities. Most prominent 1800 religious scholars of Pakistan had signed "*Paigham-e-Pakistan*", a narrative disproving TTP's extremist ideologue, defining their brutal acts as against the basic doctrines of Islam⁷⁵.

Transference:

This propaganda device seeks to "*carry over the authority, sanction and prestige of something we respect and revere to something (the propagandist) would have us accept*"⁷⁶. The review of visuals submits that TTP had used the teaching of Quran as transference device to justify their activities and to call people towards their cause. All TTP videos started with qur'anic verses centering on Jihad, its importance and instructions establishing the notion that TTP is fighting a just cause authenticated by Quran. However, an ardent look at TTP's past activities in Pakistan submits that their majority acts are against their propagated teachings. Aside religious appeal, various mainstream media clips and newspaper cuttings churning the political statements from political talk shows and programs along with newspaper cuttings had been incorporated widely in the visuals to instigate transference effect and create authenticity.

⁷⁴TTP Umar Media, "(Ibtal Ummat) New message from TTP; Champions of the Nation #2", Feb 14, 2018. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>.

⁷⁵ Waqar Ahmad, "Countering extremism by Paigham-e-Pakistan narrative", The News, September 18, 2019.

⁷⁶ Qualter, H. "Propaganda Teorisi ve Propagandanın Gelişimi", Çev. Ünsal Oskay, A.Ü. SBF Dergisi (35 /1),Ankara, (s. 255-307), (1980).

Glittering Generalities

This technique referred to *use of 'Abstract language, highly charged with emotion and cultural values, because of its power that can short-circuit people's reasoning process and make them jump to conclusions'*⁷⁷. TTP online communication and visuals are well-versed with this technique. Since inception, TTP offered its followers the same zeal, fervor and parallel partisan rhetoric of '*Amar bil Maroof*' (you enjoin what is right and forbid what is reprehensible) as promulgated by Tehreek-e-Taliban Afghanistan. The prime example of glittering generalities in TTP visuals is use of term '*Fedayeen*' (someone who kill himself for sake of Allah). Arabic and Pashto Hymns glorifying *Fedayeen* are incorporated in most visuals These hymns while glorifying suicide bombers describe TTP as harbingers of righteousness and symbol of character as cited in one of the urdu hymns "*Kirdaar bhi hain, guftar bhi hain; hum haq k alambardaar bhi hain*" (we have character and speech and we are the harbinger of righteousness").

Likewise, on various occasions, Umar media had incorporated statements of TTP leadership where they exalted the militants by calling them the fighters of "*Badr*", the most revered battle of Islam and TTP leaders as '*Ibtal Umat* (Heros of the nation)⁷⁸. Furthermore, TTP's vicious acts against Pakistani state and fellow Muslims were justified through selective religious texts. A recurrent example of glittering generalities in TTP visuals is the concept of '*Khilafat*'. TTP in all its visuals asserted to establish *khilafat* to implement *shariah* on the land and in this regard characterized its leader as

⁷⁷ Qualter, H. "Propaganda Teorisi ve Propagandanın Gelişimi", Çev. Ünsal Oskay, A.Ü. SBF Dergisi (35 /1),Ankara, (s. 255-307), (1980).

⁷⁸ TTP Umar Media, "Ibtal ummat 3", April 13, 2020. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/abtalalumah3en>.

‘*Amir ul Momineen*’ (the leader of all faithful). Similarly, references to ‘*Khurasan*’ and *Ghazwa-e-Hind*⁷⁹ (concepts fervently used by religious scholars and widespread in muslim youth about the revival of the lost glory of Islam and triumph of Muslims over non-Muslims) had been cited on various occasions to gain greater appeal and mass approval.

Name Calling

This is amongst the frequently used propaganda techniques by TTP. It is defined as “*Using words that have highly negative connotations to smear another person or group*”⁸⁰. Analysis of TTP visuals disclosed that amongst commonly used slur with reference to name calling was ‘*Murtad*’⁸¹ (most denounced status in Islam that is only rewarded by Death). To TTP, since Pakistan is a key western ally in war against terror, hence has renounced the core teachings of Islam. Thus, its officials have turned ‘*Murtad*’, who deserves nothing but death.⁸². The emotional appeal is enhanced with statements such as ‘*Ye Ghulam hai dollar k*’ (they are slaves seeking dollars), proclaiming the state as a paid mercenary responsible for carnage of Muslims.

⁷⁹ TTP Umar Media, “Roobnak war 2”, September 27, 2019. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/RNW02>

⁸⁰ Qualter, H. “Propaganda Teorisi ve Propagandanın Gelişimi”, Çev. Ünsal Oskay, A.Ü. SBF Dergisi (35 /1),Ankara, (s. 255-307), (1980).

⁸¹ The word Murtad is used to describe a person who converted to another religion or to atheism after being a Muslim.

⁸² TTP Umar Media, “(Hata la takun fitna) New message from TTP; Until there is no discord #3”, Apr 13, 2018. Video File. Retrieved from <https://jihadology.net/?s=taliban+pakistan>

Conclusion

Given dearth of research on analysis of social media propaganda, online narratives of terrorist organizations in Pakistan and the prospects of online radicalization, this study offers a nuanced understanding of TTP online communication, its major online trends, propaganda themes and appeals that is crucial in disputing online extremist ideologues, constructing an effective counter narrative and an all-inclusive countering violent extremism policy.

The research submits that various propaganda appeals, and themes were well furnished in TTP's online communication to instigate emotional appeal in its viewers. The theme '*Pakistani state-a paid mercenary*' supports ruthless TTP activities against the law enforcement agencies by calling the state a western agents. "*TTP, the real patrons of Islam*" directs association of Pakistan to its distinct Islamic identity and state TTP as a major force striving to revive the identity, establishing its popularity amongst the disgruntled youth who perceive religion as answer to all bedlam. "*TTP, the harbingers of change*" depicted failure of Pakistani state and existing global political structure to address enduring political chaos presenting shariah as sole salvation and relief to the people in chaos. "*Taliban the liberator*" depicted state oppression against neglected Baloch and Pashtun factions and TTP's scuffle to discharge them from present oppression. "*One Ummah One Force*" depicted TTP as a global movement and initiator of Global Jihad, calling all Islamic militant organizations to join their struggle against Pakistan.

Considering TTP online communication, various propaganda appeals⁸³ had been ardently incorporated to establish the key narratives. Religious connotations had been conformed in propaganda techniques to brace the anti-state call. Impressions of disassociation of Pakistan from basic Islamic

⁸³ Qualter, H. "Propaganda Teorisi ve Propagandanın Gelişimi", Çev. Ünsal Oskay, A.Ü. SBF Dergisi (35 /1),Ankara, (s. 255-307), (1980).

ideologues and classification of officials as 'Murtad' had been integrated in extensive manner. The study settles that irrespective of TTP's ardent display as adherents of Islam and forerunners of peace, their actions speak otherwise. The propagation of inter-communal harmony and engaging all social strata appears reversed by TTP's excluding *Takfiri*⁸⁴ interpretations under which minorities and adversaries are victimized and exterminated in a coldblooded fashion.

TTP because of its religious predisposition and assertion of above stated online narratives had been able to seize a few minds, but in recent years, a greater majority has prodigiously overruled their ideologues owing to ruthless strategies and carnage of the innocent. Still, the online appeals like faith in mortality apotheosis (martyrdom) and the glorification of *Fedayeen*, economic turmoil and contiguity of religion sights a lucrative bait for muddled Pakistani urban youth that is wedged between the identity crisis and economic calamity. The presence of TTP and similar extremist factions on social media platforms warrants immediate state attention as these sweeping radical ideologues can instigate discontent amongst masses against western interventions in Islamic world; deliberating terrorists's violent narratives and ruthless actions as a viable solution to all bedlam.

Saif ur Rehman Tahir served as a faculty member at Bahria University and Pakistan Navy War College. He is a certified trainer from British Council and holds MS (honors roll) in Media studies with concentration in Visual Communication and Discourse. He is presently associated with NACTA and can be reached at saif.iwnacta@gmail.com.

⁸⁴ "The declaration of other Muslim/sect as unbeliever and impure", Gilles Kepel 'Jihad the trail of Political Islam' (2002), London:IB.Trauis, Page 31.

Critical Evaluation of the National Action Plan (NAP)

Abdul Basit

Abstract

After the Army Public School (APS), Peshawar attack in December 2014, Pakistan chalked out a National Action Plan (NAP), a 20-point counterterrorism roadmap, to root out extremism and terrorism. NAP— notwithstanding its inherent gaps—was a comprehensive document and covered various aspects of Counter-Terrorism (CT) and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) in Pakistan. On the kinetic front, operation Zarb-e-Azb (Sword of the Prophet) was extended from North Waziristan to other parts of former FATA-region, Balochistan and Karachi. For non-kinetic measures, the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA)—Pakistan’s central counterterrorism body—was made functional. Against this backdrop, this article will critically analyze NAP’s implementation in Pakistan to point out additional steps needed to improve CT and CVE measures in Pakistan. While implementing NAP primary focus remained on hard measures hence soft interventions did not get the due attention. Therefore, Pakistan needs a smart approach by balancing its hard and soft CT and CVE policies to achieve sustainable peace and security.

Keywords: Terrorism, Counter-terrorism, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), extremism, radicalization, internal security, National Action Plan (NAP)

Introduction

Pakistan turned a page in its fight against terrorism when the National Action Plan (NAP), a 20-point counter-terrorism framework, was devised

and implemented in the aftermath of the Army Public School (APS), Peshawar attack in December 2014.¹ NAP offered a comprehensive CT and CVE roadmap with the notable exception of de-radicalization and rehabilitation of repentant militants.² In spite of this oversight, terrorist attacks have significantly declined across Pakistan over the last several years. Moreover, the command and control systems and infrastructure of various terrorist groups have also largely been dismantled.³

While that may be so, the twin challenge, albeit less intense, of extremism and terrorism persists in qualitatively different forms and shapes.⁴ Not only major anti-Pakistan terrorist groups such as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) and Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA), have disintegrated but some of their splinter groups have banded together to form new groups like the Islamic State of Khorasan (ISK).⁵ Likewise, extremist trends in Pakistan have seen participation of females and educated youth of urban middle and upper middle classes galvanized by new extremist ideas and narratives.⁶ Given this evolving nature of extremist and terrorist

¹ Ahmed Rashid, "Viewpoint: How Peshawar massacre changed Pakistan," *BBC News*, December 13, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-35051628>.

² Shuja Nawaz, "Countering Militancy and Terrorism in Pakistan: The Civil-Military Nexus," *United States Institute of Peace*, October 2016, p.3, <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR393-Countering-Militancy-and-Terrorism-in-Pakistan-The-Civil-Military-Nexus.pdf>.

³ "Decline in terrorism," *Dawn*, January 2, 2020, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1525816>.

⁴ "Terror attacks drop but Pakistan not out of the woods yet," *Dawn*, January 30, 2020, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1531454>.

⁵ Asad Hashim, "Pakistani Taliban down but not out, says ex-spokesman," *Al-Jazeera*, April 4, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/04/exclusive-ehsanullah-ehsan-pakistan-taliban-spokesman-200403075526508.html>.

⁶ Imtiaz Gul, "Women's Role in Recruitment for ISIS/Islamist Networks in Pakistan," *International Annals of Criminology*, Vol. 56, Special Issue 1-2, (Nov 2018), pp. 79-92; C. Christine Fair and Ali Hamza, "Women and Support for Terrorism in Pakistan," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 30, Issue 6, (July 2018), pp. 962-983, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09546553.2018.1481313?journalCode=ftpv20>; Amira Jadoon and Sara Mahmood, "Militant Rivalries Extend to Female Recruitment

landscape in Pakistan, continuous revision and re-adaptation of NAP should have been envisioned at the time of its formulation.⁷ NAP is heavily focused on kinetic aspects of CT and CVE, while the focus non-kinetic aspects (soft-approach) is still lacking.⁸

The current internal security situation in Pakistan marks absence of violence rather than sustainable peace owing to the fact that terrorism and terrorist are symptoms of deeper structural malaise, which still remain unaddressed.⁹ Hence, a strategic review of NAP is warranted keeping in view the requirements and challenges of existing security environment. Moreover, the kinetic and non-kinetic aspects of CT and CVE should be balanced to achieve sustainable peace.

Against this backdrop, this article will examine the achievements and challenges of NAP to propose additional measures to plug existing gaps. Rather than writing a point-by-point score card of NAP as done by Zahid (2016) and PIPS (2015), this article will adopt a qualitative-analytical approach to evaluate NAP.¹⁰ It has relied on ten interviews of experts and

in Pakistan,” *Combating Terrorism Centre*, September 14, 2017, <https://ctc.usma.edu/ctc-perspectives-militant-rivalries-extend-to-female-recruitment-in-pakistan/>; “Jihadi glamour: TTP launches women magazine,” *Dawn*, August 2, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1349061/jihadi-glamour-ttp-launches-womens-magazine>.

⁷ Author interview Tariq Pervez, former National Coordinator NACTA, May 7, 2020.

⁸ Farhan Zahid, “Pakistan’s CVE Programme: An Overview of Challenges and Achievements,” *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, Vol. 9, No.6, (June 2017), pp-11-16.

⁹ Author interview with Adnan Rafiq, country representative United States Institute of Peace, May 7, 2020.

¹⁰ For details see, Farhan Zahid, “Counter Terrorism Policy Measures: A Critical Analysis Of Pakistan’s National Action Plan,” *The Mackenzie Institute*, July 19, 2016, <https://mackenzieinstitute.com/2016/07/counter-terrorism-policy-measures-a-critical-analysis-of-pakistans-national-action-plan/>; “Comprehensive Review of National Action Plan,” *Conflict and Peace Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 2, (Jul-Dec 2015), pp. 9-151, https://www.pakpips.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Final_A-PIPS-Research-Journal-Final-vol-7-no2.pdf.

policymakers who were involved in formulation or implementation of different aspects of NAP, media reportage, author's own observations and published secondary sources such as book chapters, journal articles and research reports.

Spanning over three sections, the article first describes the pre and post-NAP political and security environments in Pakistan to illustrate how the landscape has evolved since the APS attack. Then, achievements of NAP have been outlined which have contributed to massive decline in terrorism and restoration of law and order across Pakistan. The final section mentions key challenges along with policy recommendations to further enhance and improve the scope of NAP.

Context and Security Environment when NAP was Created

The comparison of pre and post-NAP political and security environments is necessary to ascertain the issues which are missing from NAP and need to be incorporated. The comparison will also enable us to understand points that have been completed or have become redundant and should be removed from NAP.¹¹

Created in the after math of the APS attack, NAP called for immediate and demonstrable action against the perpetrators.¹² There was immense public

¹¹In the context of this discussion, it is equally important to consider how the National Internal Security Policy (2019-2023) corresponds to NAP. NISP (2019-2023) builds on both NAP and NISP (2014-2018) by removing points which have been achieved or became redundant and includes new points keeping in view existing political and security environment as well as continuing with ongoing long-terms measures such as madrasa reforms, countering hate speech etc. The main thrust of NISP (2019-2023) is to shift the policy focus from kinetic (as terrorism has considerably declined and terrorist groups have been dismantled) to non-kinetic measures to achieve sustainable peace and stability.

¹² Anup Kaphle, "Pakistan announces a national plan to fight terrorism, says terrorists days are numbered," *Washington Post*, December 25, 2014,

pressure on Pakistan's top political and military leadership to bring the perpetrators to justice and eliminate militancy in Pakistan so that such a tragedy does not happen again.

At that time, TTP operating out of North Waziristan region dominated Pakistan's militant landscape. Though TTP was past its peak already, it was capable of launching large scale, multiple coordinated attacks across Pakistan. The group was the go-to place for radical recruits who wished to join militancy.¹³ At the same time, TTP's ideological narrative was unchallenged and it influenced, if not dominated, the political discourse of that era.¹⁴ A case in point is the former TTP chief late Hakeemullah Mehsud's letter to the Pakistani ulema, in the run up to 2013 general elections, seeking their input on the Islamic status of democracy as a system of governance in Pakistan.¹⁵ Ahead of the 2013 elections, TTP targeted election rallies of secular-liberal Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Awami National Party (ANP) and Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) for supporting military operations in the former FATA region.¹⁶ On the

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/12/24/pakistan-announces-a-national-plan-to-fight-terrorism-says-terrorists-days-are-numbered/>.

¹³ Author interview with Muhammad Feyyaz, a PhD scholar at the Belfast University working on terrorism in Pakistan, May 8, 2020.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Saba Imtiaz, "Taliban's letter to Malala Yousafzai: this is why we tried to kill you," *Guardian*, July 17, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/17/taliban-letter-malala-yousafzai>; On August 15, 2012, TTP wrote a four-page letter to Pakistan's religious scholar mentioning that their militant struggle was not just to end Pakistan's counter-terrorism alliance with the US but it was also against democracy in Pakistan. For details see, Abdul Basit, "The US withdrawal from Afghanistan: Implication for Pakistan's Militant Landscape," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, Vol. 4, Issue 10, (October 2012), pp. 10-13.

¹⁶ Imran Kazmi, "Attacks on MQM, PPP in Karachi; five killed," *Dawn*, April 28, 2013, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1025539/attacks-on-mqm-ppp-in-karachi-five-killed>; "Pakistani Taliban target ANP leaders during election campaign," *Guardian*, April 14, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/apr/14/pakistani-taliban-target-anp-leaders>.

contrary, center-right political parties such as Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN), Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazal (JUIF) were spared for favoring negotiations with the militants.¹⁷

As mentioned above, prior to the formulation of NAP, Pakistan's political parties were divided between pro-operation and pro-negotiation camps.¹⁸ This divisive political atmosphere created a lack of political ownership and consensus needed at the national level to counter militancy and discredit extremist ideologies.

Finally, the military operations conducted before the formulation of NAP in Swat, South Waziristan and other areas were reactive in nature and lacked an institutional framework. Moreover, these operations were ad-hoc in nature, exposing Pakistan's fire-fighting approach to CT.¹⁹ Also, the pre-NAP phase of counter militancy in Pakistan focused on kinetic responses and non-kinetic measures were lacking or missing altogether.²⁰

¹⁷ M. Ilyas Khan, "Pakistan election: Taliban threats hamper secular campaign," *BBC News*, April 5, 2013, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-22022951>.

¹⁸ Zahir Shah Sherazi, "TTP willing to talk under guarantee from Nawaz, Fazal and Munawar Hasan," *Dawn*, February 3, 2013, <https://www.dawn.com/news/783368/ttp-expresses-will-to-hold-talks>; "Nawaz forms 4-member committee for peace talks with TTP," *Express Tribune*, January 29, 2014, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/664867/nawaz-forms-4-member-committee-for-peace-talks-with-ttp/>; "PTI chief urges govt to allow opening of Pakistani Taliban office," *Dawn*, September 25, 2013, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1045342>.

¹⁹ Muhammad Feyyaz, "Why Pakistan Does Not Have a Counterterrorism Narrative," *Journal of Strategic Security*, Vol. 8, No. 1-2, (Spring/Summer 2015), pp. 63-78.

²⁰ Masood Ur-Rehman Khattak and Muhammad Mushtaq, "Pakistan's Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2001-2014): An Analysis," *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 1. (2015), pp. 29-46.

Existing Security Environment in Pakistan

Since January 2015, Pakistan's political and security environment has evolved significantly, rendering certain points of NAP redundant.²¹ Similarly, some points such as creating Counter Terrorism Departments (CTDs)²², operationalizing the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) and military courts have been completed or elapsed.²³ Still other points, such as border fencing with Afghanistan²⁴, madrassa reforms and countering hate speech are ongoing.²⁵

Pakistan's existing militant landscape is a complex and over-crowded space where a plethora of militant groups with similar and opposing ideological

²¹ For instance, merger of former FATA region with KP, creation of military courts, establishing Counter Terrorism Departments (CTDs) at the provincial level as well as registering and issuing mobile SIM card using biometric system have been completed and should be removed from NAP. While points like social media monitoring for preventing and countering violent extremism, de-radicalization and rehabilitation programs for repentant militants, among others, should be included in the revised version.

²² Robert Perito and Tariq Pervez, "A Counterterrorism Role for Pakistan's Police Stations," *United States Institute of Peace*, August 2014, <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR351-A-Counterterrorism-Role-for-Pakistan's-Police-Stations.pdf>; "Senate panel for enhanced role of provincial CTDs," *Express Tribune*, January 17, 2020, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2139472/1-senate-panel-enhanced-role-provincial-ctds/>.

²³ Amir Wasim, "Military courts cease to function today," *Dawn*, March 31, 2019, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1472947>.

²⁴ Ayaz Gul, "Afghan Border Fencing to Be Completed by 2020, Pakistan Says," *Voice of America*, November 5, 2019, <https://www.voanews.com/south-central-asia/afghan-border-fencing-be-completed-2020-pakistan-says>; Mariana Babar, "Pakistan, Iran agree on border fencing," *The News*, July 19, 2019, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/500638-pakistan-iran-agree-on-border-fencing>; So far, Pakistan has fenced 9,00 kilometers of its border with Afghanistan and built 223 forts. Work on the remaining 300-kilometer border fencing and 610 forts is expected to be completed in 2020. Likewise, border fencing with Iran is in its incipient stage and so far 30 kilometers of border has been fenced.

²⁵ Saad Sayeed, "Pakistan plans to bring 30,000 madrasas under government control," *Reuters*, April 29, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-madrasas/pakistan-plans-to-bring-30000-madrasas-under-government-control-idUSKCN1S517Z>.

narratives have respectively cooperated and competed with each other.²⁶ Not only terrorism and terrorist groups in Pakistan continuously evolve but at a rapid pace as well. Between 2014 and present, these militant groups have splintered, merged, re-splintered and re-merged.²⁷

Zarb-e-Azb (Sword of the Prophet) operation launched in North Waziristan against TTP—in the aftermath of the Jinnah Airport attack, Karachi in June 2014—was further expedited and expanded following the formulation of NAP.²⁸ Zarb-e-Azb dislocated and disintegrated TTP resulting in emergence of new militant groups such as Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA), the Islamic State of Khorasan (ISK) and Hizb-ul-Ahrar (HuA).²⁹ Likewise, the nationalist-separatist insurgency in Balochistan declined and evolved due to a host of security operations and reconciliatory policies.³⁰ Government's carrot-and-stick approach forced some Baloch militant groups to move to

²⁶ Amira Jadoon, "The Militant Landscape, Tactics & Pakistan's War on Terror," *Pakistan Politics*, September 10, 2018, <http://pakistanpolitico.com/the-militant-landscape-tactics-pakistans-war-on-terror/>; Farhan Zahid, "Jihadism in South Asia: A militant landscape in flux," *The Middle East Institute*, January 8, 2020, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/jihadism-south-asia-militant-landscape-flux>.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Haji Mujtaba, "Pakistan army launches big operation after airport attack," *Reuters*, June 15, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-airstrikes/pakistan-army-launches-big-operation-after-airport-attack-idUSKBN0EQ0F720140615>.

²⁹ Jon Boone, "Isis ascent in Syria and Iraq weakening Pakistani Taliban," *Guardian*, October 22, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/22/pakistani-taliban-spokesman-isis-pledge>; Greg Myre, "Pakistan Weakens Militants, But Can It Defeat Them?" *NPR*, March 28, 2016, <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2016/03/28/472061152/pakistan-weakens-militants-but-can-it-defeat-them>; Rob Crilly, "Despite school atrocity, the Pakistani Taliban is weakening," *Al-Jazeera*, December 17, 2014, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/12/17/despite-school-atrocity-pakistan-alibani-weakening.html>.

³⁰ Abubakar Siddique, "Balochistan's Separatist Insurgency On The Wane Despite Recent Attack," *Radio Free Europe*, April 18, 2019, <https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/pakistan-balochistan-separatist-insurgency-on-the-wane-despite-recent-attack/29889887.html>.

Afghanistan and Iran, while others have surrendered to Pakistani security forces availing the amnesty.³¹

Due to the onset of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)—flagship infrastructure project of Chinese Belt and Road Initiative—Balochistan has formed the geographical nucleus of both jihadist and Baloch militant groups.³² Hence, it is unsurprising that in the last few years major terrorist attacks in Pakistan have been reported in Balochistan targeting Chinese nationals and CPEC projects. Few cases in point are the PC Gwadar attack (May 2019)³³, assault on the bus of Chinese engineers (August 2018)³⁴ in Dalbadin and the Chinese consulate attack in Karachi (November 2018).³⁵

Besides, the organizational makeups of most of the Pakistani militant groups have transformed from vertical-hierarchical structures to cell-form horizontal structures.³⁶ Zarb-e-Azb and previous military operations destroyed terrorists' infrastructure across Pakistan making it difficult for

³¹ Muhammad Zafar, "Renouncing violence: Amnesty plan unveiled for Baloch insurgents," *Express Tribune*, June 27, 2015, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/910498/renouncing-violence-amnesty-plan-unveiled-for-baloch-insurgents/>; Saleem Shahid, "500 Baloch militants surrender, abandon armed struggle," *Dawn*, April 22, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1328539>; Gul Yousafzai, "Pakistan says over 300 Baloch separatist militants surrender," *Reuters*, December 10, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-militants/pakistan-says-over-300-baloch-separatist-militants-surrender-idUSKBN1E40L1>.

³² Author interview with Farhan Zahid, Pakistan-based researcher of terrorism and political violence in South Asia, May 5, 2020.

³³ "5 people killed in Gwadar PC hotel attack; army concludes clearance operation," *Dawn*, May 12, 2019, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1481840>.

³⁴ Mohammad Zafar, "Six injured in suicide attack on bus carrying Chinese engineers in Dalbandin," *Express Tribune*, August 11, 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1778389/1-least-six-injured-balochistan-suicide-attack/>.

³⁵ Imtiaz Ali and Asim Khan, "Terror attack on Chinese Consulate in Karachi foiled; 3 terrorists killed," *Dawn*, November 23, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1447192>.

³⁶ Author interview with Farhan Zahid.

these groups to maintain large-scale organizational presence.³⁷ The cellular structures hamper the operational capability of these militant groups to carry out large-scale terrorist attacks on mainland Pakistan.³⁸

At the same time, cell structures have provided some tactical advantages to militant groups as well. Terrorist groups operating in cell formations are difficult to detect and penetrate.³⁹ Moreover, if one or a few cells come under the radar of the security agencies, it does not affect the operations of other cells. Sometimes, different cells of the same militant group are not even aware of each other's presence.⁴⁰ Also, cell-formations alleviate the need for centralized communication with the main leadership and provides greater operational freedom and flexible decision-making.⁴¹

On the ideological front however, the Islamic State (IS)'s Caliphate, Al-Qaeda's Ghazwa-e-Hind and the Black Flags of Khorasan and the Taliban's emirate narratives have created a fierce competition for winning over new recruits, resources and ideological supremacy.⁴² These extremist narratives have created new fault lines in addition to exacerbating the existing ones.⁴³ Moreover, the scope of these ideological narratives is broad unlike the

³⁷ Sameer Lalwani, "Actually, Pakistan Is Winning Its War on Terror," *Foreign Policy*, December 10, 2015, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/12/10/actually-pakistan-is-winning-its-war-on-terror/>.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Tom Keatinge and Florence Keen, "Lone-Actor and Small Cell Terrorist Attacks: A New Front in Counter-Terrorist Finance?" *Royal United Services Institute*, January 2017, https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/201701_op_lone-actor_and_small_cell_terrorist_attacks.1.pdf.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Brian A. Jackson and David R. Frelinger, "Understanding Why Terrorist Operations Succeed or Fail," *Rand Corporation*, 2009, p.12, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional_papers/2009/RAND_OP257.pdf.

⁴² Mona Kanwal Sheikh, "Islamic State Enters Al-Qaeda's Old Hotbed: Afghanistan and Pakistan," *Connections Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 1, (2017), pp. 37-49, <https://doi.org/10.11610/Connections.16.1.03>.

⁴³ Ibid.

parochial focus of the most extremist narratives of the past. Consequently, due to this globalization of extremist narratives in Pakistani militant landscape, events and developments in the Middle East affect behaviors and agenda of terrorist groups in Pakistan.⁴⁴ Particularly, developments in Syria and Iraq have a direct fallout on the sectarian conflict in Pakistan⁴⁵.

Social media has also been pivotal in redefining Pakistan's militant landscape opening new avenues for the terrorist groups. Social media has become an integral part of terrorist groups' tool kit.⁴⁶ Radical individuals who are tech-savvy with sharp social media skills are of great importance to terrorist groups. Despite being uprooted from their hideouts in the former FATA region, Balochistan and other parts of Pakistan, these militant groups have been able to maintain virtual presence through active digital footprints. Social media has eliminated physical barriers for disseminating ideological propagandas, engage with new potential recruits and plot new attacks.⁴⁷ Furthermore, social media's deeper penetration has rapidly increased the pace and flow of information resulting in a lower threshold for radicalization.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Ali Alfoneh, "Shia Pakistani Fighters in Syria," *The Atlantic Council*, April 26, 2017, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/syriasource/shia-pakistani-fighters-in-syria/>.

⁴⁵ Shahzeb Ali Rathore, "The Saudi-Iran Factor in Pakistan's Sunni-Shia Conflict," *Middle East Institute*, May 30, 2017, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/saudi-iran-factor-pakistans-sunni-shia-conflict>.

⁴⁶ Ariel Victoria Lieberman, "Terrorism, the Internet, and Propaganda: A Deadly Combination," *Journal of National Security Law and Policy*, Vol. 9, No. 95, (January 2017), pp. 95-124, <https://jnslp.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Terrorism-the-Internet-and-Propaganda-FINAL.pdf>.

⁴⁷ Kiran Hassan, "Social Media, Media Freedom and Pakistan's War on Terror," *The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 107, Issue 2, (March 2018), pp. 189-202, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00358533.2018.1448339>.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Finally, a generational shift has also taken place among the militant groups in Pakistan. Since the 1980s, people from different parts of the world came to Pakistan and Afghanistan for training and participation in militancy. This new generation of Pakistani militants is more violent, tech-savvy, and overly ambitious. Most recruits of this new militant generation are college and university educated youth from middle and upper middle-class segments of urban areas.⁴⁹ This new generation of militants has no past baggage and possesses a qualitatively different worldview from their predecessors. It takes keen interest in developments taking place in Syria and Iraq rather than staying invested only in local and regional conflicts.⁵⁰

NAP's Achievements

Decline in Terrorism

Since NAP's implementation, incidents of political violence, terrorism and insurgency and resultant casualties have declined significantly across Pakistan (*See Chart 1 & 2*).⁵¹ All no-go areas in Karachi, Balochistan and the former FATA regional have been eliminated and the writ of the state has been restored.⁵² As mentioned above, terrorist groups and their infrastructure has largely been destroyed, forcing them to flee to

⁴⁹ Madeeha Anwar, "Pakistan's Emerging Threat: Highly Educated Youth Gravitate to Radicalization," *Voice of America*, May 6, 2017, <https://www.voanews.com/extremism-watch/pakistans-emerging-threat-highly-educated-youth-gravitate-radicalization>.

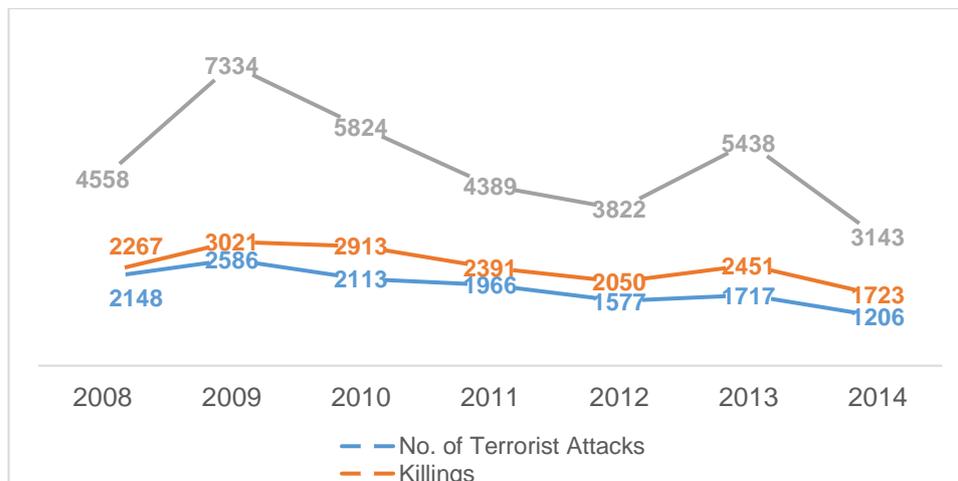
⁵⁰ Abdul Basit, "Threat of Urban Jihadism in South Asia," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, Vol. 10, No. 3, (March 2018), pp. 1-5, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/CTTA-March-2018.pdf>.

⁵¹ "Decline in terrorism," *Dawn*, January 2, 2020, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1525816>.

⁵² Kamran Yousaf, "Operation updates: Army restores writ of the state in tribal belt," *Express Tribune*, April 4, 2016, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1078374/operation-updates-army-restores-writ-of-the-state-in-tribal-belt/>; Ambreen Ishrat, "Karachi notebook: No more no-go areas?" *Dawn*, April 19, 2015, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1176755>; Mohammad Zafar, "No no-go areas left in Balochistan," *Express Tribune*, March 22, 2019, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1933854/1-no-no-go-areas-left-balochistan/>.

Afghanistan (TTP and its splinter groups) and Iran (Baloch separatists).⁵³ One measure of improving security situation in Pakistan is the return international cricket,⁵⁴ limited revival of tourism⁵⁵ and increasing foreign direct investment from China, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).⁵⁶

Chart 1: Terrorist Attacks and Casualties in Pakistan (2008-2014)⁵⁷



Source: Data compiled from Pak Institute for Peace Studies' Pakistan Security Reports (2008-2014)

⁵³ Kunwar Khuldune Shahid, "On the Taliban, Pakistan, and Islamic State: An Interview With the Former TTP Spokesman," *The Diplomat*, April 20, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/04/on-the-taliban-pakistan-and-islamic-state-an-interview-with-the-former-ttp-spokesman/>; Zia Ur Rehman, "The Baluch insurgency: linking Iran to Pakistan," *Norwegian Peace Building Resource Centre*, May 2014, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/180927/31c68a20991b5a98b0dece4fd929c9c8.pdf>.

⁵⁴ Ali Chughtai, "International cricket returns to Pakistan," *Al-Jazeera*, October 31, 2017, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/10/international-cricket-returns-pakistan-171030123517481.html>.

⁵⁵ "Foreign tourists in Pakistan up 70% in 2018," *Gulf News*, November 17, 2019, <https://gulfnews.com/world/asia/pakistan/foreign-tourists-in-pakistan-up-70-in-2018-1.67891432>.

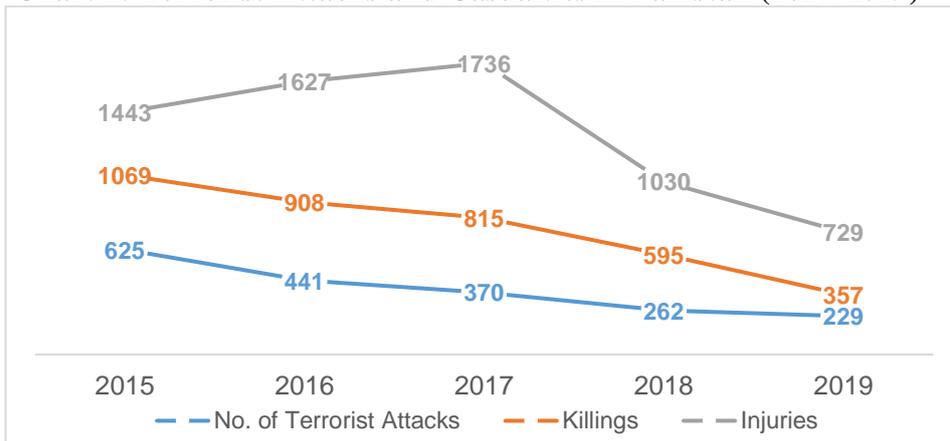
⁵⁶ Sabrian Toppa, "Why Young Pakistanis Are Learning Chinese," *The Atlantic*, November 14, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/11/pakistan-china-cooperation-cpec/568750/>; "Saudi Arabia signs \$20bn in deals with Pakistan," *BBC News*, February 18, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-47274672>; "UAE to invest \$5bn in oil refinery project in Pakistan by end of 2019: report," *Dawn*, October 4, 2019, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1508944>.

⁵⁷ For details see, Pak Institute for Peace Studies' Pakistan Security Reports at <https://www.pakpips.com/publications#1512730923805-d52fde57-07fa>.

As per (*Chart 1*), 2009 was the most volatile year in Pakistan with 2,586 terrorist attacks accounting for 3,021 killings.⁵⁸ Since then, however, terrorist incidents and casualties have slumped in Pakistan through to 2014. In a span of six years (2008-2014), the number of terrorist attacks halved from 2,148 in 2008⁵⁹ to 1,206 in 2014.⁶⁰ Still, the number of terrorist attacks in 2014 is quite high— 3.30 attacks per day.⁶¹

However, following the implementation of NAP and operation Zarb-e-Azb, terrorism has decreased by 48 percent from 1,206 attacks in 2014 to 625 attacks in 2015 (*See Chart 2*).⁶² Likewise, the number of casualties dropped from 1,723 to 1,069, showing a 38 percent decline.⁶³ In the coming years, both attacks and casualties have continued to drop further resulting in 229 attacks and 357 killings in 2019 (*See Chart 2*).⁶⁴

Chart 2: Terrorist Attacks and Casualties in Pakistan (2015-2019)⁶⁵



Source: Data compiled from Pak Institute for Peace Studies' Pakistan Security Reports (2015-2019)

⁵⁸ "Pakistan Security Report 2009," *Pak Institute for Peace Studies*, January 2010, p. 3, <https://pakpips.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/sr2009.pdf>.

⁵⁹ "Pakistan Security Report 2008," *Pak Institute for Peace Studies*, January 2009, p.3, <https://pakpips.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/sr2008.pdf>.

⁶⁰ "Pakistan Security Report 2014," *Pak Institute for Peace Studies*, January 4, 2015, p.7, <https://pakpips.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/sr2014.pdf>.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² "Pakistan Security Report 2015," *Pak Institute for Peace Studies*, January 3, 2016, p.8, <https://pakpips.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/sr2015.pdf>.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ "Pakistan Security Report 2019," *Pak Institute for Peace Studies*, January 4, 2020, p. 20, <https://www.pakpips.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/sr2019.pdf>.

⁶⁵ For details see, Pak Institute for Peace Studies' Pakistan Security Reports at <https://www.pakpips.com/publications#1512730923805-d52fde57-07fa>.

National Consensus on CT and CVE

Prior to NAP, a divided public opinion and the lack of political support hindered Pakistan's efforts to devise a comprehensive CT policy.⁶⁶ Resultantly, not only Pakistan's CT policy was ad-hoc, but the results also remained less than ideal. Following any military operation, terrorism subsided for a short period of time only to re-emerge with even greater ferocity.⁶⁷ Generally, people considered terrorism as the negative fallout on instability in Afghanistan and reaction to Pakistan army's decision to deploy troops along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border on America's behest.⁶⁸

The APS attack and subsequently NAP marked a turning point in Pakistan's fight against extremism and terrorism. The attack, termed as Pakistan's 9/11, shook the entire nation.⁶⁹ NAP not only bridged the civil-military divide on CT and CVE, but also eliminated the political differences between the vying political parties.⁷⁰ Even the most ardent supporters of negotiations with TTP namely JUIF, PTI and JI had to change their longstanding political stance in the face growing public anger. Consequently, NAP provided the much-needed public and political

⁶⁶ Muhammad Feyyaz, "Why Pakistan Does Not Have a Counterterrorism Narrative," *Journal of Strategic Security*, Vol. 8, No. 1-2, (Spring/Summer 2015), pp. 63-78, <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1409&context=jss>.

⁶⁷ Author interview with Farhan Zahid.

⁶⁸ Ahmed Rashid, *Descent Into Chaos: Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Threat to Global Security*, (London: Penguin, 2009).

⁶⁹ Carmen Fishwick, "Peshawar school massacre: This is Pakistan's 9/11 – now is the time to act," *Guardian*, December 19, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/19/peshawar-school-massacre-pakistan-911>.

⁷⁰ Shahid Ahmad Afridi, "Pakistan's Counterinsurgency: Military and Civilian Approach," *Strategic Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 3, (Autumn 2016), pp. 21-37, http://issi.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/2-shahid_ahmad_afриди_SS_Vol_36_No.3_2016.pdf.

ownership to the top political and military leadership to go after the terrorist groups.⁷¹

Public support and political consensus are the most essential components of any effective CT and CVE framework.⁷² In a country like Pakistan, with a meager resource-base, allocating funds for resource-extensive CT operations in the former FATA region, Balochistan and Karachi required a string public buy-in.⁷³ Without public support and political backing, it is difficult to mobilize public funds over a long period of time. NAP provided that public buy-in and political backing.⁷⁴

Institutional Framework for CT and CVE

NAP has provided a functional institutional framework for CT and CVE in Pakistan.⁷⁵ Though there is still considerable room for improvement. Prior to implementation of NAP, there was widespread confusion among various government and security institutions stemming from overlapping institutional mandates, sluggish bureaucratic system as well as lack of cooperation and coordination. The APS attack itself was partly a result of this lack of coordination. On August 28, 2014, an intelligence-based threat alert was issued to different government departments in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa about a possible attack on an army-run educational

⁷¹ Author interview with Ihsan Ghani, former National Coordinator NACTA, May 8, 2020.

⁷² David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, (London: Praeger Security International, 2006).

⁷³ Author interview with Farhan Zahid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Author interview with Tariq Pervez.

institution.⁷⁶ However, this warning was ignored resulting in one of the most devastating terrorist attacks in Pakistan's history.⁷⁷

In the aftermath of NAP, NACTA has been made functional as the main coordinating agency to oversee the overall implementation of CT and CVE policies.⁷⁸ Presently, NACTA is spearheading various CVE initiatives being implemented across Pakistan.⁷⁹ Various committees implementing different points of NAP at the provincial level submit their reports to NACTA every month.⁸⁰ After six months, a detailed review of the submitted reports is carried out.⁸¹ Similarly, NACTA has created a CVE-wing under its organizational setup and formulated National Counter Extremism Policy Guidelines as well as national narratives to counter extremist ideologies.⁸²

In the war against terrorism intelligence sharing is of vital importance. Sharing of intelligence among different LEAs puts the security machinery a step ahead of the enemy. For this purpose intelligence Wing (IW) of NACTA plays pivotal role since it works as a bridge between various LEAs.⁸³

⁷⁶ "Warning of Peshawar attack was issued on August 28," *Geo Tv*, December 22, 2014, <https://www.geo.tv/latest/76943-warning-of-peshawar-attack-was-issued-on-august-28>.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ "Strengthening Nacta," *Dawn*, September 27, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1435280>.

⁷⁹ Author interview with Mohammad Ali Babakhel (Director General, NACTA), May 7, 2020.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² "National Counter Extremism Policy Guidelines Pakistan," *National Counter Terrorism Authority*, January 2018, <https://nacta.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/NCEP-Guidelines.pdf>.

⁸³ "Joint Intelligence Directorate," *National Counter Terrorism Authority*, <https://nacta.gov.pk/joint-intelligence-directorate-jid/>.

Challenges and Policy Gaps

Evidence-based and Data-driven Approach

Different policy areas under NAP such as countering hate speech, extremism and terrorism require an evidence-based and data-driven approach.⁸⁴ Empirically driven policy initiatives are necessary to make informed policy decision keeping in view the magnitude of the problem, available resources, manpower and timelines.⁸⁵ Sometimes, a policy can be segregated into different phases if resources are scarce and manpower is less or not trained enough. Also, knowing what is achievable versus what is desirable is critical for efficient policy outcomes.⁸⁶

Most of the work on terrorism and extremism in Pakistan is anecdotal, event-driven and episodic, barring few exceptions.⁸⁷ Hence, most deductions and conclusions are simply assumed rather than empirically substantiated.⁸⁸ Moreover, due to the advent of social media and globalization of extremist narratives, terrorism and extremism evolve at a rapid pace.⁸⁹ Hence, keeping abreast with these changing dynamics is critical for policymakers. CT and CVE frameworks should be flexible and adaptive, so they could be revised according to changing requirements.⁹⁰

Investing more in Research and Development (R & D) will go a long way in creating a concrete foundation for future policy-formulations in CT and

⁸⁴ Author interview with Ihsan Ghani.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Author interview with Adnan Rafiq.

⁸⁷ Muhammad Feyyaz, "The discourse and study of terrorism in decolonised states: the case of Pakistan," *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, Vol. 9, Issue 3, (2016), pp. 455-477, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17539153.2016.1192261>.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Author interview with Farhan Zahid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

CVE. For instance, developing expertise on how terrorist recruitment, propaganda dissemination and communication takes place on different social media platforms and how this can be countered is one area where attention is required in the near future, especially keeping in view the evolving terrorist landscape and their changing preferences.⁹¹

Likewise, radicalization of educated youth of middle and upper middle-class segments of the urban areas is another area where policymakers should pay close attention. In the last few years, incidents such as Abdul Wali Khan University student Mashal Khan's lynching⁹², Liaquat Medical College student Naureen Laghari's online recruitment as a suicide bomber by IS for targeting Easter Services in Lahore⁹³, calls for systematic introspection of why and how a fragment of Pakistan's educated youth is being drawn into religious extremism and ethno-nationalist separatism.

De-radicalization and Rehabilitation

When NAP was formulated, it covered almost all aspects of CT and CVE in Pakistan with the notable exception or de-radicalization and rehabilitation of repentant militants. De-radicalization and rehabilitation strategies constitute reformative components of CVE and CT policymaking.⁹⁴ People's reason to join terrorism are as diverse as the

⁹¹ Rober Graham, "How Terrorists Used Encryption?" *CTC Sentinel*, Vol. 9, Issue 6, (June 2016), pp. 20-25, https://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CTC-SENTINEL_Vol9Iss614.pdf.

⁹² Warda Imran and Madiha Nasir, "10 months on: A timeline of brutal lynching of Mashal Khan," *Express Tribune*, February 7, 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1628444/1-10-months-timeline-brutal-lynching-mashal-khan/>.

⁹³ Ayaz Gul, "Pakistan Probes Detained IS Female Suicide Bomber Who Planned to Assault Christians," *Voice of America*, April 17, 2017, <https://www.voanews.com/east-asia/pakistan-probes-detained-female-suicide-bomber-who-planned-assault-christians>.

⁹⁴ Author interview with Farhan Zahid, Pakistan-based researcher working on terrorism and political violence in South Asia.

phenomenon itself. Everyone is not ideologically motivated, some people take to terrorism due to identity related issues such as search for a sense of belonging and purpose or struggle for recognition.⁹⁵ Others join out of revenge, anger and frustration against the system. For them, terrorism is a form of catharsis and a power trip. Likewise, some take to militancy for socio-economic reasons, thrill factor or simply peer pressure.⁹⁶

So, a deeper understanding of recruitments patterns and their underlying reasons of different extremist and terrorist networks in Pakistan would better inform policymakers how to reform repentant militants who are not ideologically motivated and willing to leave the life of militancy.⁹⁷ Generally, there are three phases of a militant's lifecycle: a) entry, b) transit, c) and exit.⁹⁸ At each stage, a militant's underlying motivation to join or leave militancy could change and evolve. So, the factors which might motivate or compel him to join militancy is different from what keeps or push him to leave it.⁹⁹

De-radicalization and rehabilitation allow policymakers to target less ideologically motivated militants who were involved in minor offences to leave militancy.¹⁰⁰ This is done through psychological screening where each militant's trajectory to radicalization is reconstructed and then his

⁹⁵ Malini Subramanyam, "Motivation leading to radicalization in terrorists," *Forensic Research & Criminology International Journal*, Vol. 6, Issue 4, (2018), pp. 301-307, <http://medcraveonline.com/FRCIJ/FRCIJ-06-00221.pdf>.

⁹⁶ Rex A. Hudson, "The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?" *Library of Congress*, September 1999, <https://fas.org/irp/threat/frd.html>.

⁹⁷ John Horgon, "Deradicalization or Disengagement?" *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 2, No. 4, (2008), <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/32/html>.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Sam Mullins, "Rehabilitation of Islamist terrorists: Lessons from criminology," *Dynamics of Asymmetrical Conflict*, Vol. 3, Issue 3, (January 2010), pp. 162-193, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17467586.2010.528438>.

counseling and rehabilitation is carried out in line with the recommendation of the psychologist.¹⁰¹ Later, religious scholars and motivational speakers as well as education and vocation training modules are employed for reforming and rehabilitating the repentant militants.¹⁰²

In 2009, Pakistan army started de-radicalization and rehabilitation centers in Malakand division as pilot projects which were to be emulated by the political government at the national level.¹⁰³ Similar initiatives were launched in Punjab and the former FATA region. However, these programs were discontinued due to lack of funding or other political reasons.¹⁰⁴ A comprehensive national level de-radicalization and rehabilitation initiative is still needed. A re-evaluation of NAP should consider including de-radicalization and rehabilitation components.¹⁰⁵

Non-kinetic CVE Aspects

While states and governments defeat terrorist groups, it is the societies that prevail over extremism. So far, the major thrust of NAP's focus has been on kinetic aspects of CT and CVE.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, various military operations have been pivotal in bringing down terrorism and dismantling terrorist

¹⁰¹ Arie W. Kruglanski, Michele Gelfand, and Rohan Gunaratna, "Detainee Deradicalization," *Association for Psychological Science*, January 2010, <https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/detainee-deradicalization>.

¹⁰² Angel Rabasa, Stacie L. Pettyjohn et al., "Deradicalizing Islamist Extremists," *Rand Corporation*, 2010, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2010/RAND_MG1053.pdf.

¹⁰³ Selina Adam Khan, "Deradicalization Programming in Pakistan," *United States Institute of Peace*, September 2015, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/194057/PB193-Deradicalization-Programming-in-Pakistan.pdf>.

¹⁰⁴ Arsla Jawaid, "Understanding Pakistan's Deradicalization Programming," *United States Institute of Peace*, January 2020, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2020/01/understanding-pakistans-deradicalization-programming>.

¹⁰⁵ Author interview with Tariq Pervez.

¹⁰⁶ Author interview with Adnan Rafiq.

networks in Pakistan. However, in the absence of equally effective non-kinetic policy, kinetic measures can lose their efficacy over time.¹⁰⁷ Kinetic measures are required to blunt the sharp edge of terrorist threat and buy time and space for non-kinetic interventions to systematically address the underlying structural causes that lead to extremism and terrorism.¹⁰⁸

In the current scenario, when various terrorist networks have been dismantled in military operations in the former FATA region, Balochistan and Karachi, close attention should be accorded to non-kinetic aspects of CVE.¹⁰⁹ In their current form, these measures still lack a systematic operational approach. Their scope, in line with policy guidelines, needs to be enhanced and expanded.¹¹⁰ Moreover these initiatives need to adopt a proactive approach to pre-empt extremist propaganda and ideologies. For that, the non-kinetic CVE policies should have an interface with structural reforms under a whole-of-state-and-society approach.

Under the public-private partnership, the government should work with different civil society organizations to strengthen CVE work at the grassroots level.¹¹¹ It is important to mention that such measures do not simply operate on goodwill gestures and smartness of ideas. Rather, better

¹⁰⁷ "Revisiting Counter-terrorism Strategies in Pakistan: Opportunities and Pitfalls," *International Crisis Group*, July 22, 2015, pp.5-8, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/pakistan/revisiting-counter-terrorism-strategies-pakistan-opportunities-and-pitfalls>.

¹⁰⁸ Author interview with Dayyab Gillani, assistant professor of political science at Punjab University, May 5, 2020.

¹⁰⁹ Saira Bano Orakzai, "Pakistan's Approach to Countering Violent Extremism (CVE): Reframing the Policy Framework for Peacebuilding and Development Strategies," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 42, Issue 8, (January 2018), pp. 755-770, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2017.1415786>.

¹¹⁰ Author interview with Mohammad Ali Babakhel (Director General, NACTA).

¹¹¹ Author interview with Sheharyar Kahn, a consultant working with the Ministry of Interior, Pakistan, May 5, 2020.

service delivery and clean image of the government among the populace lie at the heart of creating space and traction for the government-supported narrative challenging extremist ideologies.¹¹²

Revising NAP

When NAP was formulated, it did not flow from any policy framework despite the fact that work on more than half of the points mentioned in it was already underway.¹¹³ In future, whenever NAP is reviewed and re-evaluated, it should be given a policy cover to make it more holistic.¹¹⁴ Moreover, its focus should be terrorism-specific rather than terrorist-centric. Terrorist actors can evolve and change but the phenomenon of terrorism transcends space and time. Therefore, counter-terrorism reforms and initiatives need to be phenomenon centric as opposed to actor centric.¹¹⁵ After the 18th amendment, most of the points included in NACTA relate to the provinces. Therefore, NACTA should be expanded at the provincial level that will improve implementation and coordination¹¹⁶.

Prior to revision of NAP, it is critical to devise an elaborate implementation mechanism. Various committees working on different aspects of NAP should also be reconstituted.¹¹⁷ In a way, the National Internal Security Policy (NISP, 2019-2023) flows from NISP (2014-2018)¹¹⁸ and NAP. So,

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Author interview with Tariq Pervez.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Author interview with Dayyab Gillani.

¹¹⁶ Author interview with Mohammad Ali Babakhel (Director General, NACTA).

¹¹⁷ Author interview with Ihsan Ghani.

¹¹⁸ Full text of National Internal Security Policy (2014-2018) can be found at NACTA's website <https://nacta.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/National-Internal-Security-Policy-2014.pdf>.

all the points mentioned in NAP are in NISP (2019-2023)¹¹⁹. Either the incumbent government can merge NAP and NISP (2019-2023) and come up with its own policy document or revise the latter in line with current political and security environment.¹²⁰

In the context of ongoing intra-Afghan peace process, various militant groups have already started repositioning themselves keeping in view any possible outcomes of these negotiation.¹²¹ The former spokesperson of Ihsanullah Ihsan has hinted at negotiations between TTP and ISK to cooperate in future. These realignments of various militant groups and changing regional environment should be factored in during the revision of NAP.¹²²

Conclusion

Though terrorist incidents have significantly declined in Pakistan, structural causes still remain. Hence, terrorism is likely to persist in Pakistan but in small pockets as a low-intensity threat. At the same time, extremism has increased despite a steep decline in terrorism in Pakistan. This clearly indicates that kinetic interventions have yielded positive results, but non-kinetic measures are still a work-in-progress. Above all, providing political ownership and adequate funding is critical to get positive results.

¹¹⁹ Full text of National Internal Security Policy (2019-2023) can be found at Ministry of Interior's website <https://www.interior.gov.pk/index.php/downloads/category/32-policies#>.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Asad Hashim, "Pakistani Taliban down but not out, says ex-spokesman," *Al-Jazeera*, April 4, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/04/exclusive-ehsanullah-ehsan-pakistan-taliban-spokesman-200403075526508.html>.

¹²² Author interview with Zahid Shahab Ahmed, Research Fellow at Deakin University, Australia, May 4, 2020.

Pakistan's fight against terrorism and extremism is currently at crossroads. Ensuring continuity of NAP by addressing various redundancies and gaps is urgently needed. It is equally important to enhance the scope of existing non-kinetic measures under NAP. Simultaneously, external factors which have a direct fallout on Pakistan's internal peace and security should be pursued proactively. Any outcome (positive or negative) of the intra-Afghan peace will have a fallout on Pakistan's security landscape. So, providing continuous support for the intra-Afghan peace process to bring the Afghan war to a politically negotiated settlement is necessary for amicable resettlement of Afghan refugees and sustainable peace in Pakistan.

Abdul Basit is a research fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore. He can be reached at isabasit@ntu.edu.sg.

From Counter-Terrorism to Counter Violent Extremism: An Analysis of Pakistan’s Internal Security Policies

Muhammad Makki, Syed Ali Akash

Abstract:

Countering violent extremism has emerged as an important part of Pakistan’s counter-terrorism strategy. This paper aims to discuss how Pakistan’s counter-terrorism strategy has moved beyond the *hard* measures to counter violent extremism while recognizing and giving precedence to *soft* measures. In doing so, this paper examines Pakistan’s policy responses, with a specific focus on the promulgation of the National Internal Security Policy 2014-2018 & 2018-2023. Within the context of a wider analytical discussion, this article argues that several important strands of the internal security policies point towards a significant detachment from traditional *hard* measures; thus, re-conceptualizing the paradigm in order to address the root causes or structural determinants of violent extremism.

Keywords: Counter Terrorism, Violent Extremism, National Internal Security Policy (NISP), National Action Plan (NAP)

Introduction

In order to explain the genesis of terrorism and its subsequent evolution in Pakistan, the existing literature is traditionally clustered around certain recurring themes, such as the emergence of Taliban in Afghanistan and its spillover into Pakistan¹, ethno-religious polarization and identity-based

¹ Nasreen Akhter, “Pakistan, Afghanistan and The Taliban,” *International Journal on World Peace* 25, no. 4 (December 2008): 49-73; Daud Khattak, “The Complicated

conflict², systematic re-orientation of the society during the 1980s.³ Much of the literature has also well-framed the role of successful operations conducted by Pakistan military in erstwhile FATA which have played an instrumental role in curbing the menace of terrorism in the country — *the hard way*.⁴

While acknowledging various counter-terrorism related measures taken by Pakistan, we must also pay attention to the argument that these efforts had been *ad hoc* in nature⁵ and the necessity of formulating actual policies to address the multifaceted terrorism in Pakistan transpired in the later years. Here one may argue that the focus of Pakistan's counter-terrorism related strategy has been on 'external' threats, largely originating from hostile neighbors; thus, undermining the need to compose and implement a comprehensive and robust national 'internal' security policy.⁶ Nonetheless, the belated formulations of internal security policies exhibit the state's

Relationship between the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban." *Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point* 5, no. 2 (February 2012): 1-24.

² Frederic Grare, "The Evolution of Sectarian Conflicts in Pakistan and the Ever-Changing Face of Islamic Violence." *Journal of South Asian Studies* 30, No. 1 (April 2007): 127-143. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00856400701264068>; Abdul Basit. "Why Sectarian Violence Is Resurging in Pakistan." *The National Interest*, 24 October, 2016.

³ Shaun Gregory. "The ISI and the War on Terrorism." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 30, No. 12 (March 2007):1013-1031. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100701670862>; Safdar Sial, "Pakistan's role and strategic priorities in Afghanistan since 1980." Report published at *Norwegian Peacebuilding resource Centre*, June 2103.

⁴ Mukesh Kumar Khatwani and Ishrat Afshan Abbasi, "An Overview of Major Military Operations in the Tribal Areas of Pakistan." N.D. May, 2018. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326225279_An_Overview_of_Major_Military_Operations_in_the_Tribal_Areas_of_Pakistan; Iram Khalid and Muhammad Iqbal Roy. "Pakistan's Military Operations: The Counter terrorism." *JRSP* 53, No. 2 (July-Dec 2016): 239-251; Zahoor Khan Marwat, "Three years of Radd-ul-Fasaad's success." *The News*, 14 March, 2020.

⁵ Muhammad Feyyaz, "Why Pakistan Does Not Have a Counterterrorism Narrative." *Journal of Strategic Security* 8, No. 1-2 (June 2015): 63-78.

⁶ Muhammad Feyyaz, "The Discourse and Study of Terrorism in Decolonized States: The Case of Pakistan." *Critical Studies on Terrorism* (2016): 1-23.

commitment towards not only the complex categorization of violent extremism and terrorism but also the necessary implementation plan to ensure the effectiveness of the countermeasures. In this vein, it is important to understand the meaning of countering violent extremism. Although the term lacks any universal definition but for the purpose of this research, we comprehend countering violent extremism as “proactive actions to counter efforts by extremists to recruit, radicalize, and mobilize followers to violence. Fundamentally, CVE actions intend to address the conditions and reduce the factors that most likely contribute to recruitment and radicalization by violent extremists.”⁷

More importantly, among many issues of concern, countering violent extremism also became a priority of the national security apparatus. This challenge was first explicitly formulated in the 2018 National Internal Security Policy (NISP, 2018). With regards, NISP (2018) aims to address the structural determinants or the conditions which lead to the manifestation of violent extremism. Later in 2018, the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) released the National Counter-Extremism Policy Guidelines (NCEPG, 2018) which exclusively focused on explicating the conditions which create a conducive environment for nourishing extremism. Hence, both the NISP (2018) and NCEPG (2018) clearly distanced themselves from the prior exclusive focus on *hard* measures.

In this article, we examine the policy responses to counter violent extremism, with a specific focus on the promulgation of the NISP 2014-2018 & 2018-2022. The article focuses particularly on those facets of the

⁷ Department of Homeland Security, USA.

policy measures that have identified the attention on soft measures to counter the menace of violent extremism. Within the broader analytical discussion, the article analyses the NISP (2018) to explicate how the revised policy has considered the phenomenon of violent extremism as multidimensional; thus, paying attention to a wide range ‘countering’ and ‘preventing’ measures in many different domains.

Understanding the Evolution of Pakistan’s Counter-Terrorism Strategy: From *Hard* to *Soft* Measure

Before the general election of 2013, Pakistan witnessed a brutal wave of terrorist attacks. The phase revealed a highly complex and evolved composition of ‘new’ terrorism and its organization. Here, understanding the phenomenon of ‘new’ terrorism is important which fundamentally draws attention to the changed (operational and organizational) dynamics in contemporary evolved terrorism. Consequently, significant scholarship has been produced to unfold the normative complexities attached to the ‘new’ terrorism (the new paradigm).⁸

Similarly, Pakistan witnessed the evolved nature of terrorism. For instance, the ‘new’ terrorism organized itself into a structure of a decentralized movement; hence establishing its footprints outside the usual contested

⁸ Thomas Copeland, 2001. “Is the New Terrorism Really New?: An Analysis of the New Paradigm For Terrorism”. *Journal of Conflict Studies* 21, no. 2 (August 2001). <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/JCS/article/view/4265>; Isabelle Duyvesteyn, “How New Is the New Terrorism?” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 27, No. 4(June 2010): 439-454. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100490483750>; David. Tucker, “What Is New about, the New Terrorism and How Dangerous Is It?” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 13. No.3 (September 2010).

landscape of erstwhile FATA.⁹ In this vein, we observed the emergence of various local chapters — such as Panjabi Taliban and Quetta Shura.¹⁰ The phenomenon can be understood as the convergence of various pre-existing (violent) ethno-sectarian identities within the broader master identity.¹¹

National Internal Security Policy (2014 — 2018)

Given the above discussion, the deteriorating security situation called for a comprehensive response in a form of policy that may be able to counter the threat at multiple fronts. In response, Pakistan drafted its first national internal security policy in 2014 (i.e., NISP 2014) which reflected a need for civil-military consensus over the encountered issues of national security.¹² Indeed, the NISP (2014) was a ground-breaking effort on the behalf of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and NACTA in drafting a comprehensive document specifying the terrorism-related quandaries and the counter retorts. The policy accentuated “to protect national interests of Pakistan and addressed critical security issues and concerns with an institutionalized response through the National Counter Terrorism Authority.”¹³

⁹ Riffath Khaji, “Lahore Attack: An Expansion of the TTP's Target Profile?” *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies* 11, (April 2016). http://www.ipcs.org/comm_select.php?articleNo=5014

¹⁰ Rahimullah Yousafzai, “Who are Punjabi Taliban?” *The News on Sunday*, 24 April, 2016; David Clark Scott, “What's the Quetta Shura Taliban and why does it matter?” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 24 February 2010.

¹¹ D. A. Snow & D. McAdam, D, “Identity work processes in the context of social movements: Clarifying the identity/movement nexus” (2000). In S. Stryker, T. J. Owens, & R. W. White (Eds.), *Social movements, protest, and contention*; v. 13. Self, identity, and social movements (p. 41–67). University of Minnesota Press; Saba Noor, “Transformation of Sectarian Terrorism in Pakistan.” *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 4, NO. 6(June 2012): 10-14.

¹² E Breheny, “Post-Election Terrorist Violence in Pakistan and the Quest for a New National Security Policy.” *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 5, No.10 (October 2013): 3-6.

¹³ NISP 2014, p. 19

Furthermore, the policy was distinctive in its approach towards the concept of *security*, as it linked the traditionally conceived idea of security to *human security* [i.e., the security of people of Pakistan].¹⁴ Within the conceptual debate of *human security*, NISP (2014) conceived the threat as “serious traditional and non-traditional threats of violent extremism, sectarianism, terrorism, and militancy”.¹⁵

In terms of dealing with some of the structural determinants of terrorism, NISP (2014) necessitated the madrassah reforms.¹⁶ It was clearly mentioned that the role of (few) madrassas, operating outside the ambit of the state structure, cannot be discounted as institutions promoting violent extremism in the country: “There are some troublesome aspects of these madrassas, which impinge on national internal security, include financing from unidentified sources; publication and distribution of hate material.”¹⁷ Other major components of the policy were curbing the terrorist financing and the repatriation and registration of Afghan Refugees.¹⁸

Furthermore, the policy emphasized on the *reconstruction* of infrastructure destroyed due to terrorism and the need for a national narrative against terrorism.¹⁹ In addition, it must be acknowledged that, for the first time the policy highlighted the need for a counter-narrative to violent extremism and

¹⁴ *ibid*, p. 25

¹⁵ *ibid*, p. 26

¹⁶ Saad Rasool, “The spirit of Madrassah reform.” *The Nation*, 05 May 2019. <https://nation.com.pk/05-May-2019/the-spirit-of-madrassa-reform>; Abdul Rauf Iqbal and Sobia Raza, “Madrassa Reforms in Pakistan: A Historical Analysis.” *ISSRA Papers*, 2015: 27-47. https://ndu.edu.pk/issra/issra_pub/articles/issra-paper/ISSRA_Papers_Vol7_Issue1_2015/05-Madrassah-Reforms-in-Pak.pdf

¹⁷ NISP 2014, p. 19

¹⁸ *ibid*, p. 8-9

¹⁹ *ibid*, p.6-8

terrorism to “promote pluralism, freedom, democracy and a culture of tolerance”.²⁰ The policy also raised the significance of a national narrative, curbing terrorist financing and repatriation and/or registration of Afghan refugees. In brief, such considerations pointed towards the adoption of soft measures to *counter* and *prevent* the radicalization and extremism.

There are three main elements of NISP (2014) security-framework: *dialogue*, *isolation*, and *deterrence*. The policy considered *dialogue* as a political mean to resolve the internal conflicts and to achieve ‘peace and reconciliation’. The role of *dialogue* (and negotiation) was also extended to both the (ideologically-driven) anti-state and non-state actors, however, it was made clear that such practice will be carried out within the constitutional parameters. The second element, i.e., *isolation*, referred to the strategies that must be able to ‘isolate the terrorist organizations “socially, legally, economically and politically.”²¹ Such a strategy has been well argued to deprive the terrorist organisation from those (human, financial, and operational) resources which play an instrumental role in organizing and carrying out terrorist operations.²² Lastly, the policy emphasised on improving the *deterrence* capacity in order to counter the internal security related to the (non)traditional threats.

The framework to implement the above-mentioned three components was based on two-pronged strategy. The first part was more focused on the *soft* measures and for the purpose a Comprehensive Response Plan (CRP) was introduced to combat the non-traditional threats of (violent) extremism.

²⁰ *ibid*, p. 13

²¹ *ibid*, p. 40

²² Muhammad Feyyaz, “Conceptualizing Terrorism Trend Patterns in Pakistan - an Empirical Perspective.” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 7, No. 1 (February 2013): 73-102.

Concurrently, the *hard* component of the policy was labeled as Composite Deterrence Plan (CDP) and it was focused on capacity building of security forces and development of an anti-terrorist force at the federal level in the form, entitled Rapid Response Force (RRF). While commenting on the CDP and CRP, Farooq and Zaidi stated that CRP was more focused on winning hearts and minds of the people, whereas CDP promoted the vision of National Internal Security Apparatus (NISA)²³; hence, proposing a more *proactive* response than a *reactive* one.²⁴

Indeed, the formulation of NISP (2014) was a commendable step, however, owing to certain shortcomings, the policy became subject to strong scholarly criticism. For instance, in similar to the previous counter-terrorism approaches, scholars identified that the policy is once again committed to over-emphasize the role of ‘external’ threat rather addressing the conditions *within* the country.²⁵ While acknowledging that NISP (2014) was the first detailed (counter-terrorism) policy document drafted by the civilian government of Pakistan, Ullah and colleagues argued that it failed to explain and contextualize the menace of violent extremism and terrorism in diverse contextual realities.²⁶ They further stated that the policy document does not effectively address the erratic nature of extremism and terrorism in different provinces of Pakistan and the counter response

²³ National security Apparatus (NSA) can be considered as a centralized mechanism or machinery to ensure national security.

²⁴ K. K. Farooq & S. A. Zaidi, *The National Internal Security of Pakistan - An Assessment*. (Oslo: Center for International and Strategic Analysis, 2014) 5.

²⁵ Tariq Khosa, “Roadmap to Internal Security.” *DAWN*, 08 March, 2014; Raza Rumi, *Charting Pakistan's Internal Security Policy*. (Washington: United States Institute of Peace 2015)

²⁶ Irfan Ullah, Ashfaq U, Rehman, Sajjad Ali & Azra Yasmin, “National Internal Security Policy: An Analysis of Prospects and Challenges for Pakistan.” *Journal of Applied Environment and Biological Sciences* 8, No.2 (Nov 2018): 178-183.

respectively. Khosa also emphasizes on the role of ‘context’ in determining the effectiveness of counter-terrorism related measures.²⁷ Similarly, Rana argues that NISP (2014) lacks the essential approach to define extremism and terrorism in the context of Pakistan and perpetually lacks in explaining the national narrative of Pakistan against terrorism.²⁸

Farooq mentioned that NISP was not formulated with sufficient political *will* and it was not backed properly within the political realm of Pakistan. Thus, the implementation of the counter-terrorism related measure suffered from lack of political and institutional support.²⁹ Additionally, it has been also pointed out that the circumstances necessitating the emergence of NAP (see section 2.2) hindered the implementation of the policy in its truest sense.

National Action Plan (2014)

The massacre of 132 school children on 16 December 2014 at the Army Public School, Peshawar, resulted in a national emergency situation that resulted in the formulation of National Action Plan (NAP). The NAP exhibited an unparalleled ‘national consensus’ and reverberated befitting response to terrorism which severely impacted the very fabric of the society. NAP contains 20 points (see Table 1) addressing a wide range of root causes and problems associated with terrorism. While evaluating the contours of NAP, Babakhel argues that “with political ownership, clarity, better civil-military understanding, coordination, and public support, we (Pakistan)

²⁷ Khosa “Roadmap to Internal Security.”

²⁸ M. A. Rana, “Literature Responses to Extremism in Pakistan.” *Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies* (2014): 1-10.

²⁹ K. K. Farooq, In Search of Security. *The News*, 20 April, 2014. <http://tns.thenews.com.pk/search-security/#.XDzPbdIzbMx>

may effectively respond to the challenge and convert it into an opportunity for structural readjustment.”³⁰

The mechanism for the implementation of NAP was based on policy guidelines that were provided by a central committee. The committee was chaired by the Prime Minister and it included nine cabinet members, along with fifteen subcommittees to oversee specific components of NAP. The implementation also constituted the formation of an ‘apex committee’ for every province. The primary function of the apex committees was to coalesce information from chief ministers, provincial bureaucrats, senior military officials, and representatives from military and civilian intelligence.³¹

Several scholars have attempted to critically analyze NAP.³² For instance, Babakhel has applied a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) model to analyze various contours of NAP. In doing so, he elucidated that while consensus among civilian and military leadership, government and opposition parties are its strengths, no defined implementation timeline and the absence or inadequate exclusive monitoring apparatus are the primary weaknesses of NAP.³³ Zahid (2016)

³⁰ M. A. Babakhel, “Is NAP a Challenge or an Opportunity?” *The Express Tribune*, 01 Nov, 2016. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1217850/nap-challenge-opportunity/>

³¹ International Crisis Group, 2015

³² Farhan Zahid, “Counter Terrorism Policy Measures: A Critical Analysis of Pakistan’s National Action Plan.” *The Mackenzie Institute*, 19 July 2016; M. A. Babakhel, “Is NAP a Challenge or an Opportunity?” *The Express Tribune*, 01 Nov, 2016; Zeeshan Salahuddin, “Is Pakistan’s National Action Plan Actually Working? Two years after Pakistan unveiled its strategy for fighting terrorism, the results are mixed.” *The Diplomat*, 24 December, 2016; Asadullah Khan, “National Action Plan: Achievements and Limitations.” *ISSI issue brief*, 04 February, 2019; Sehar Kamran, “National Action Plan: bigger responsibilities lie ahead.” *The Nation*, 03 June, 2019.

³³ Babakhel, “Is NAP a Challenge or an Opportunity?”

further contends that NAP cannot be considered as a counter-terrorism strategy as “it lacks detail, coherence, and rigor”. These aspects challenge the very posed term *Plan* attached with NAP and hence reduce it to be labeled as *to-do list*.³⁴ Rumi holds the opinion that NAP only came as reshaping of NISP (2014) objectives, nevertheless, it did propose two new features in the counter-terrorism policy; establishment of military courts and death penalty for convicted terrorists.³⁵

Khan believes that the areas which have been identified in NAP are not ‘innovative’. According to the author, the major challenge is to devise an effective implementation and evaluating mechanism that is fundamentally based on a framework containing both *hard* and *soft* measures.³⁶ One of the comprehensive analysis of NAP was conducted by Ramay. The analysis statistically reviewed the NAP to explicate the implementation status of the plan. Ramay’s findings concluded that the establishment of Counter-Terrorism Departments (CTD) and Counter-Terrorism Financing Units (CTFU), Cybersecurity bill and FATA plan of action can be deemed as triumphs of the NAP. While the repatriation of Afghan refugees, refurbishing of the criminal justice system and FATA reforms highlight the sluggish progress of NAP.³⁷ In further evaluation, the Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT) monitored the implementation of NAP from January 2015 to December 2016 in the

³⁴ Zahid, “Counter Terrorism Policy Measures: A Critical Analysis of Pakistan’s National Action Plan.”

³⁵ Rumi, *Charting Pakistan's Internal Security Policy*

³⁶ Khan, “National Action Plan: Achievements and Limitations.”

³⁷ S. A. Ramay, “National Action Plan: Implementation, Gaps and Spaces.” *Sustainable Development Policy Institute* (2016). Available at: <https://sdpi.org/publications/files/National-Action-Plan-Implementation-Gaps-and-Successes.pdf>

province of Punjab. Resultantly, the institute underlined various capacity-related issues influencing the efficacy of NAP (such as political divide and dysfunctional mechanisms to measure and assess the counter-terrorism effectiveness).³⁸

Table 1: The 20 Agenda Items of National Action Plan (NAP) - 2014

<i>National Action Plan (NAP) – 2014</i>	
Implementation of death sentence of those convicted in cases of terrorism.	Special trial courts under the supervision of Army. The duration of these courts would be two years.
Militant outfits and armed gangs will not be allowed to operate in the country.	NACTA, the anti-terrorism institution will be strengthened.
Strict action against the literature, newspapers and magazines promoting hatred, extremism, sectarianism and intolerance.	Choking financing for terrorist and terrorist organizations.
Ensuring against re-emergence of proscribed organizations.	Establishing and deploying a dedicated counter-terrorism force.
Taking effective steps against religious persecution.	Registration and regulation of religious seminaries.

³⁸ PILDAT, Monitor on Implementation of National Action Plan to Counter Terrorism in Punjab, 2017.

Ban on glorification of terrorists and terrorist organizations through print and electronic media.	Administrative and development reforms in FATA with immediate focus on repatriation of IDPs.
Communication network of terrorists will be dismantled completely.	Measures against abuse of internet and social media for terrorism.
Zero tolerance for militancy in Punjab.	Ongoing operation in Karachi will be taken to its logical end.
Balochistan government to be fully empowered for political reconciliation with complete ownership by all stakeholders.	Dealing firmly with sectarian terrorists.
Formulation of a comprehensive policy to deal with the issue of Afghan refugees, beginning with registration of all refugees.	Revamping and reforming the criminal justice system.

Source: National Counter Terrorism Authority, Available at <https://nacta.gov.pk/nap-2014/>

National Internal Security Policy (2018 — 2023)

On 31 May 2018, the MoI released the National Internal Security Policy NISP 2018-2023 (NISP, 2018 — revised version of NISP 2014). It is important to acknowledge that, NISP (2018) remarkably reflected a consistency in the security policies of Pakistan (Mirza 2018; Waseem

2018).³⁹ In contrast to NISP (2014), the revised version clearly pronounced the terrorist organizations which were posing threat to the state's security; "the top threats to Pakistani national security are the Tehrik-i-Taliban, Pakistan (TTP), Islamic State's (IS) presence in Afghanistan and possible spill-over in Pakistan, return of militants from Syria and Iraq."⁴⁰ It was interesting to observe that the policy refused to confine the debate of violent extremism within the religious institutes (i.e., madrassa). Counterintuitively, it highlighted the emerging trend of violent extremism in conventional modern education institutes.

NISP (2018) dedicated much of its focus on elucidating the drivers of violent extremism. This focus depicted significant attention towards the *conditions* or pathway(s) that leads towards the manifestation of violent extremism or terrorism — both at the *micro* and *macro* levels. With regards, there have been significant scholarly attempts to understand the structural determinants or conditions of violent extremism.⁴¹ Much of the focus has been devoted towards understanding how (socio-economic, political, and spatial) horizontal inequalities⁴² are a source of violent conflict. Similarly,

³⁹ Jaffer Abbas Mirza, "NISP: a long way to go." *The News*, 20 June, 2018; Zoha Waseem, "National Internal Security Policy in review." *The Friday Times*, 08 June, 2018.

⁴⁰ NISP 2018, p. 19-22

⁴¹ J. G. Montalvo, & M. Reynal-Querol, "Why Ethnic Fractionalization? Polarization, Ethnic Conflict and Growth." *Economics Working Papers*. Available on: <https://ideas.repec.org/p/upf/upfgen/660.html>; L.-E. Cederman & L. Girardin, "Beyond Fractionalization: Mapping Ethnicity onto Nationalist Insurgencies." *American Political Science Review* 101, No.1(February): 173-185; H Allan, A Glazzard, S Jespersen, S Reddy-Tumu & E. Winterbotham. *Drivers of violent extremism: hypotheses and literature review*. (London: RUSI 2015).

⁴²M Ranstorp. Statement of Magnus Ranstorp to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States. National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States (2003). https://911commission.gov/hearings/hearing1/witness_ranstorp.htm; Francis. Stewart, "The Dynamics of Horizontal Inequalities." UNDP Human Development Report (2016). http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/stewart_layout.pdf

conflict-related studies often revolve around unnerving questions about the interplay of identity with violent extremism.⁴³ As can be derived from the hinted literature, NISP (2018) provided a comprehensive approach to both *prevent* and *counter* violent extremism. Interestingly, the policy contextualized the mentioned theoretical underpinnings while considering “youth alienation and frustration, exclusionary identity narratives, regional inequality, lack of social justice, rule of law and lack of accountability”⁴⁴ as factors which condition violent extremism in Pakistan.

Therefore, NISP (2018) primarily shifted its approach towards *soft* measures. In order to address the complex challenges related to violent extremism, the policy organized its structure around four main domains⁴⁵: *administrative, ideational, and socio-economic*. The *administrative* domain pointed towards the need for enhancing the capacity of both military and LEA’s to ensure an effective counter-terrorism response. Attention was equally paid to the necessary coordination between different relevant institutions. The *ideational* domain referred to counter the narrative of violent extremism and bring attention to the role of ‘cyber-space’ which has changed the terrorist recruitment and communication mechanisms. Furthermore, this aspect revealed a commitment towards exposing the extremists’ narratives which have fundamentally created a space within which violent extremism has been accepted by the society. Lastly, it was recognized that *socio-economic* conditions must be addressed in order to overcome those inequalities which create environment and reason for

⁴³ Christopher Dean, “The role of identity in committing acts of violent extremism – and in desisting from them.” *Criminal Behavior and Mental Health* 27 (October 2017): 281-285.

⁴⁴ NISP 2014, p. 23-26

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 15-17

nourishing and accommodating violent extremism. Another highlighting aspect of the policy was ‘inclusive development’ and its link with the sustainable peace. The policy also included the detailed mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation, while outlining the suggested tasks and timelines for relevant institution.

The basic implementation structure of NISP (2018) was developed around certain themes — called *6Rs*: *Reorient*, *Reimagine*, *Reconcile*, *Redistribute*, *Recognize*, and *Regional Approach*. *Reorient* refers towards the entire reorientation of the state security apparatus. The proposed reorientation was not just confined with the idea of modernization of security-based capacity and infrastructure but a complete shift towards “a people-centric approach.”⁴⁶ To this end, several priority areas were identified including enhanced strategic inter-organizational/provincial cooperation and justice system reforms (legal and police reforms, judicial and prison reforms). As mentioned earlier, the *Reorient* considered securing cyber-space and combating financing aspect of terrorism as its important concerns. In its Second-R, NISP (2018) *Reimagined* the society as a “tolerant, inclusive and democratic polity”.⁴⁷ In doing so, it showed an explicit commitment towards perusing a ‘shared vision’ intertwined through a national narrative. In this vein, the policy pointed towards the significant reforms and/or reconstruction required in the education sector (including madrassas), media, tourism and culture-related industry. Such a multi-sectoral mobilization indeed contains not only a great potential to create a society

⁴⁶ NISP 2018, p. 9

⁴⁷ *ibid*

which is fundamentally based on inclusiveness but also (re)produces of a positive image of the country.

Furthermore, NISP (2018) proposed a process of *Reconciliation* (and re-integration) particularly focusing on the regions which have been under sub-nationalist and ethno-political militancy. Here, it is important to consider that NISP (2018), in contrary to NISP (2014), did not extend any possibility of ‘dialogue’ with the militancy which is being steered in the name of religion.

As an aside, Tariq Parvez termed the above form of militancy as ‘Militancy in the name of religion’ (MITNOR).⁴⁸ In 2015 he produced National Counter Terrorism and Extremism Strategy (NACTES) and offered a detailed account of the structure of terrorism in Pakistan, its multifacetedly, and an approach to combat the menace through a comprehensive and integrated approach. NACTES did not aim to produce a parallel ‘strategy’ but contributed as a ‘joined-up’ effort to counter terrorism. Nevertheless, reviewing Parvez’s work is very important as it helps to categorize terrorism within Pakistan (i.e., the typology of terrorism: Militancy in the name of Religion [MITNOR]; sub-nationalist Militancy; Ethno-political Militancy).⁴⁹

Returning to NISP (2018), however, the strategy did not limit itself with mere *Reconciliation* but created an importance of conducive environment within which the desired outcome can be achieved. While echoing the afore-

⁴⁸ Tariq Parvez, “National Counter Terrorism and Extremism Strategy.” *IPR Report*, February 2015. <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#search/tariq/FMfcgxbVWHLNjPKhNNdDvDxdJfScRph?projector=1&messagePartId=0.1>

⁴⁹ Ibid, p.1-6.

mentioned socio-economic domain, the attention was brought towards the necessary post-conflict development and reconstruction in erstwhile FATA, KPK, and overall socio-economic development in the deprived province of Balochistan. The main objective behind this strategy was to break the vicious cycle — i.e., poverty-underdevelopment-violent conflict and extremism. It was also well recognised that the effectiveness of deradicalization or rehabilitation programs (e.g., Sabaoon, Rastoon, Saprlay, Navi Sahar, Mishal)⁵⁰ cannot be ensured without any ‘incentive structure’ and a broader conducive environment within which the individuals can re-position and re-introduce themselves to the society positively and productively.

It was further recognized that the alternative value systems or discourses *within* the society is pivotal to generate a shared vision or a unified national narrative. With regards, state must protect the vulnerable or marginalized groups or identities (e.g., women, youth, and religious minorities) “through redistributive measures focusing on the provision of social protection safety nets”⁵¹ and execute developmental for underdeveloped areas in order to address sever spatial inequalities.

Moreover, a *Regional* approach was advocated to counter the menace of violent extremism and terrorism. This approach suggests that the phenomenon of terrorism is transnational in nature; thus, requires a close coordination and collaboration at both regional and international level. In doing so, NISP (2018) exhibited strong commitment towards promoting

⁵⁰ Abdul Basit, “Pakistan’s Militant Rehabilitation Programme: An Overview.” *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 7, No. 9 (October 2015): 10-17.

⁵¹ NISP, 2018, p. 10

peace in the neighboring countries and the overall region to ensure sustainable peace *within*. It was clearly mentioned that such a meaningful (regional and international) collaboration must be driven by geo-economics rather geopolitics.

Lastly, *Recognize* established itself as one of the most important theme of the policy — from normative point of view. The feature well argued that the counter-terrorism and counter violent extremism related policies need to be informed by rigorous research. The issue has been well explored in the context of Pakistan where the terrorism and extremism related research has not been able to produce data-driven research that can identify the factors that shrink the journey between *extreme ideas* and *extreme actions*. Such theorized and empiricized explanations are usually embedded in social inquiries (sociological and social-psychological disciplinary approaches)⁵² however, have failed to inform the complex processes behind the manifestation of terrorism in its various forms.

The above discussion provides a comprehensive account of NISP (2018) in order to reveal the fundamental policy shift towards *soft* approach to counter the growing violent extremism in the society (Rafiq 2018; Nabeel 2018).

⁵² Randy Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories.” *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, No. 4(winter 2011): 7-36; A. W Kruglanski, K Jasko, M. Chernikova, M Dugas & D Webber, “To the fringe and back: Violent extremism and the psychology of deviance.” *American Psychologist* 72, No. 3 (2017): 217–230. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000091>; Micheal H. Becker, “When Extremists Become Violent: Examining the Association Between Social Control, Social Learning, and Engagement in Violent Extremism.” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, June 2019. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1057610X.2019.1626093>

Nevertheless, various scholars have raised concerns over the policy which are primarily related to the implementation mechanism.⁵³

Figure 1: National Internal Security Framework (2018 - 2023)



Source: National Internal Security Policy (2018 p. 35), Available at: <https://www.interior.gov.pk/index.php/downloads/category/32-policies>

In January 2018, NACTA released detailed concerning counter violent extremism; entitled, National Counter Extremism Policy Guidelines (NCEPG, 2018). The main motivation behind the formulation of the guidelines were to fight the ideological threat — ‘war of ideas’ — associated with violent extremism and underlying root causes (see Table 3

⁵³ K. Ali, “Internal Security Linked with Marginalised Groups’ Assimilation into Society: NACTA.” *Dawn*, 19 June, 2018. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1414690>; I. Gul, “NISP 2018: Missing the Point.” *Daily Times*, 05 June, 2018. <https://dailytimes.com.pk/248919/nisp-2018-missing-the-point/>; F. Nabeel, “National Internal Security Policy 2018-2023 — A Critical Assessment.” *The Daily Times*, 02 Aug, 2018. <https://dailytimes.com.pk/276539/nationalinternal-security-policy-2018-2023-a-critical-assessment/>

for detail summary of policy interventions)⁵⁴. NCEPG defines extremism as:

Extremism is broadly identified as having absolute belief in one's truth with an ingrained sense of self-righteousness. The entrenched sense of righteousness enables the holder of belief to grow judgmental attitude towards other people's beliefs followed with intolerance. Extreme polarization will divide society in to 'us and them'. Such extremist behavior is then likely to be accompanied with violence symbolizing dismissal of diversity and an urge based on conviction in justness of need for imposition of one's belief system to exclusion of rest. Such violence is also motivated to further social, political and economic objectives.

Another prominent feature of the NCEPG is the comprehensive implementation mechanism which outlines its 'intervention plan' (see Figure 2 for details) and responsibilities assigned to each relevant institution or body. Apart from implementation mechanism, NCEPG (2018) also provides the terms of reference for functioning of the 'Illaqa Aman wa Behbud Committees'.⁵⁵ It highlights the guidelines for the committees to work for the enhancement of peace and wellbeing in the society. Central Monitoring Unit and Specialized Monitoring Units were given the responsibility to implement NCEPG and introduce new features to the guidelines, when required. Indeed, NCEPG focused on the phenomenon of

⁵⁴ The Express Tribune, "NACTA Creates Policy Guidelines to Counter Extremism through 'War of Ideas'." *The Express Tribune*, 12 May, 2018. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1708143/1-nacta-creates-policy-guidelines-counter-extremism-warideas/>

⁵⁵ NCEPG (2018), p. 44-45

violent extremism, however the guidelines have not been given the due attention. Still, measures are needed to be taken to implement its provisions.

Table 2: Summary of National Counter Extremism Policy Guideline 2018 (NECPG)

National Counter Extremism Policy Guideline (NCEPG) 2018	
Improve rule of law, governance, and service delivery (at district and Tehsil level), particularly in post conflict areas (including Balochistan, Sindh, and FATA).	Need to create ‘Online Ethical Behavioural Code’ to promote an ethical culture in the digital age.
As recommended by the FATA Reforms Report, FATA needs to be mainstreamed and particular attention should be paid to development initiatives.	Envision Madaris as partner in fight against extremism and terrorism. There is greater need to operationalize the mainstreaming of Madaris as a subject of ‘Education Department’ (as underscored in NAP).
Provincial forces shall be strengthened through capacity building. In view, efficient and strategic resource allocation is required at District levels.	Education reforms should promote diversity and inclusiveness in order to minimise (ethno-religious, and Madaris vs. modern education) polarisation. This includes the need for humanisation of curriculum, promoting dialogical exercise and critical thinking.

<p>Long term and strategic planning is required to address the regional (socio-economic) inequalities (related to: employment opportunities, skill development, physical infrastructure, education, and health facilities).</p>	<p>Engage in constructive dialogue at education institutes (under the guidance of religious scholars and leaders). The debates/dialogues should be cross-disciplinary in nature (politics, science, human rights, international relations etc.)</p>
<p>Improve the accountability mechanism to ensure the efficiency of public sector.</p>	<p>Promote ‘cultural education’ at public-private schools and Madaris through strengthening cultural institutions and inter-provincial cultural exchanges. To this end, ‘cultural hubs’ may be established at district or divisional level. This cultural infrastructure shall focus on, promoting visual arts; theatre; historical and archaeological sites; and culture of minorities.</p>
<p>Improve the civic-engagement to better understand and assess localised problems, including countering extremist ideologies. To this end, NE CPG proposed the formations of ‘local area committees for peace and welfare’.</p>	<p>Expand the prison reforms to ensure an effective process of prisoners’ reformation, rehabilitation, and reintegration.</p>

<p>Improve the role of broadcast media not only to combat terrorism and extremism but also to deconstruct the violent narratives; with reference to Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority Ordinance of 2002’ and ‘NAP’.</p>	<p>Establish a reconciliation policy/strategy through ‘Reconciliation Commissions’ at both provincial and national level. The Commissions may play a role of liaison towards reconciliation process between government/LEAs apparatus and militant groups (such as in Balochistan).</p>
--	---

Source: Adapted from NCEPG 2014, Available at: <https://nacta.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/NCEP-Guidlines.pdf>

Figure-2: National Counter Extremism Policy Interventions



Source: National Counter Extremism Policy Interventions. National Counter Extremism Policy Guidelines (2018), Available at: <https://nacta.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/NCEP-Guidlines.pdf>

Conclusion

Based on the above discussion, several observations can be made regarding the extent to which Pakistan's policies have shifted towards the soft approach to counter the menaces of violent extremism and terrorism. The most notable one is that the formulated policies in the shape of NISP (2014 & 2018) and NCEPG (2018) emphasised on the need to understand the structural determinants or drivers of violent extremism and terrorism. Evidently, the evolved approach is now more centred around understanding the *conditions* which lead to the manifestations of violent extremism. Such an approach has also led the authorities to develop typology of terrorism in Pakistan. As we have discussed earlier, NISP (2018) recognizes that the role of quality research in "academia and universities is essential in identifying the causal factors which push social actors towards extreme viewpoints and actions".⁵⁶ Unfortunately in the context of Pakistan, the lack of data-driven research restrains from the thorough understanding of the problem at hand and thus impedes in devising the effective countermeasures.

At a broader strategic level, our analysis also reveals a level of continuity and consistency in the counter-terrorism approach. The discussion further explicates that the NISP (2014) was overshadowed by the release of NAP. Nevertheless, the significance of NAP in the fight against terrorism remains undisputed. Following NAP, the revised internal security policy (i.e., NISP, 2018) can be considered as a monumental milestone in a shift towards 'softer' counter-terrorism approach. With regards, various issues were highlighted in the policy such as, post-conflict development, addressing

⁵⁶ NISP (2018), p. 10

socio-economic and regional inequalities, madrassas reforms, FATA reforms, deradicalization and rehabilitation, counter-narrative to violent extremism etc. Furthermore, NCEPG (2018) supplemented the country's drive against violent extremism. The guidelines recognized the role of non-traditional threats (mainly ideologically-driven) associated with violent extremism.

Countering violent extremism is indeed a very complex challenge and necessarily requires a framework that can accommodate both the *soft* and *hard* measures. Such realization can be well observed in the Pakistan's counter-terrorism journey which exhibits a gradual shift from event-driven response. Nevertheless for any counter measures in relations to violent extremisms, one need to evaluate and assess the implementation approach attached to its goal. This oversight is important because the evaluation and assessment mechanism of Pakistan's counter violent extremism has yet to emerge, as evaluation holds a critical importance in determining the effectiveness of any policy.

Dr. Muhammad Makki is Head of Department of Research (PCS) at the Centre for International Peace and Stability (CIPS), National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), Pakistan. He can be reached at mmakki.pcs@cips.nust.edu.pk.

Syed Ali Akash is a Research Associate at the Centre for International Peace and Stability, National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST). He can be reached at ali.akash512@gmail.com.

Global Cyber Terrorism: Pakistan's Cyber Security in Perspective

Adil Adeel, Rafi us Shan

Abstract:

The world is facing different forms of Cybersecurity challenges. Cyber-terrorism is emerging challenge that has become a real threat for the peace and security of many countries. During the last decade and half use of cyber technologies to challenge the national autonomy, disturb the social and economic fabric of countries has been established. Hence, Cyber space is accepted as a fifth operational domain after land, sea, air and space. The goals of Cyber-terrorism can be social, political, ideological, religious, or similar. For instance, the motive behind state-sponsored Cyber-terrorist attacks can be political. Cyber-terrorism activities carried out by anonymous groups may have social or ideological agenda. Cyber-terrorists achieve their goals through a number of acts, such as destroying critical infrastructure and information systems, compromising communication systems, obtaining classified information, spreading propaganda, intimidating people, launching Distributed Denial of Service (DDOS) attacks, and planting Advanced Persistent Threats (APTs).

This paper covers some of the recent Cyber-terrorism incidents in order to understand the impact of Cyber-terrorist activities on peace and security of the countries. The paper also highlights Pakistan's current Cybersecurity approach, the internal and external security challenges in the context of Cyber-terrorism. Paper also reviews the capacity enhancement technologies in cyber domain such as Cyber ranges and Cyber drills and summarize the

recommendations that can really help the country in improving the overall Cybersecurity posture.

Keywords: Cyber-terrorism, Global Cybersecurity strategies, Pakistan's Cybersecurity posture, Cyber Ranges

Introduction

Over the last three decades advancements in information and communication technologies, globalization and geo-political incidents emerged a new society which human history has never experienced before. The majority of the countries who were opponents in the cold war era are presently cooperating with each other; working for the betterment and secure future of the world. The global collaboration has given a boost to technology sector, especially information and communication technologies. Although the world has thrived due to globalization, it is also a fact that terrorism has emerged as a critical threat. It is debatable whether terrorism increased due the globalization or it is the result of excluding some communities from being a part of globalization which turned them into a global threat¹. However, the main concern is the fact that terrorism has become more prominent than ever. One such devastating threat is the emergence of Cyber terrorism.

Many people confuse the term "Cyber-crime" with "Cyber-terrorism". However, there is a difference of approach between the two terms. Cyber-crime refers to a criminal act where the computer technology is used as a

¹ A. Khan and M. A. R. Estrada, "Globalization and terrorism: an overview," *Quality & Quantity*, vol. 51, pp. 1811-1819, 2017.

vector, a target, or both². Cyber-crime can be related to non-political, non-social, non-religious, or non-ideological objectives, such as hacking, fraud, forgery, money laundering, and illegal interception of data that can compromise the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of information³. On the other hand, Cyber-terrorism can be an act of spreading fear among communities through different acts, such as threatening state security, destructing critical assets, displacing habitats, killing people, and causing financial damage to the countries⁴. Although the term “Cyber-terrorism” first appeared in 1980s by Barry Collin, a research fellow at Institute for Security and Intelligence in California, there is no single definition of Cyber-terrorism that has gained global acceptance. Few attempts have been made by different researchers to define the term “Cyber-terrorism”. Some definitions explained the “Cyber-terrorism” in a broader perspective while others have narrowed down the concept. For instance, Dorothy Denning, a US-American information security researcher, tried to incorporate different threat vectors and motives in her Cyber-terrorism definition. According to Denning; *“Cyber-terrorism is the convergence of cyberspace and terrorism. It refers to unlawful attacks and threats of attack against computers, networks, and the information stored therein when done to intimidate or coerce a government or its people in furtherance of political or social objectives. Further, to qualify as Cyber-terrorism, an attack should result in violence against persons or property, or at least cause enough harm to generate fear. Attacks that lead to death or bodily injury,*

² L. Janczewski, *Cyber warfare and cyber terrorism*: IGI Global, 2007.

³ K. Archick, D. Foreign Affairs, and T. Division, "Cybercrime: The council of Europe convention," 2005

⁴ A. Alqahtani, "The Potential Threat of Cyber-terrorism on National Security of Saudi Arabia," in *ICIW 2013 Proceedings of the 8th International Conference on Information Warfare and Security: ICIW 2013*, 2013, p. 231

explosions, or severe economic loss would be examples. Serious attacks against critical infrastructures could be acts of Cyber-terrorism, depending on their impact. Attacks that disrupt nonessential services or that are mainly a costly nuisance would not"⁵. Mark M. Pollitt, a 20-year veteran of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) narrowed down the "Cyber-terrorism" definition by combing the "Terrorism" definition, by the US Department of State, with the "Cyberspace" concept of Barry Collin. According to Pollitt; *"Cyber-terrorism is the premeditated, politically motivated attack against information, computer systems, computer programs, and data which result in violence against non-combatant targets by sub national groups or clandestine agents"*⁶.

This paper reviews the Cyber-terrorism challenges by highlighting some past Cyber-terrorist attacks against different countries. The main contributions of the paper are as follows:

- An overview of Cyber-terrorist attacks in different countries
- Pakistan's conventional security challenges
- Pakistan's Cyber ranking in Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) surveys
- A comparison of Pakistan GCI ranking with regional powers
- Cybersecurity challenges of Pakistan
- Pakistan's current Cybersecurity infrastructure
- Recommendations for Pakistan's current Cybersecurity posture

⁵ D. E. Denning, "Cyberterrorism: Testimony before the special oversight panel on terrorism committee on armed services US House of Representatives," *Focus on Terrorism*, vol. 9, 2000.

⁶ M. M. Pollitt, "Cyberterrorism—fact or fancy?," *Computer Fraud & Security*, vol. 1998, pp. 8-10, 1998.

The rest of the paper is organized into following sections. Section 2 covers few internationally recognized Cyber-terrorist attacks and their impact. Section 3 is about Pakistan's current Cyber-security state, the challenges, and way forward for the country. Section 4 concludes the paper.

Past Cyber-Terrorist Attacks

In November, 1988 Robert Morris caught the attention of the world by creating a program termed as *Morris worm*. Robert Morris was a graduate student at Cornell-University who launched the worm in order to map the internet. Although the intentions were not to harm the internet, the worm slowed down around 60,000 machines connected to the internet at that time, costing an estimated loss of \$98 million⁷. After this event, many Cybersecurity researchers have started working on enhancing the internet security to protect the cyberspace from such devastating incidents in future. However, the efforts were not enough to stop the misuse of the internet and technology⁸. Cyber-terrorists managed to breach the Cyber-defense of different states on many occasions. Many of these attacks were a threat to the national security of the countries. Following is the brief overview of some of these Cyber-terrorist attacks, highlighting the apparent mission goals, motives, and the impact of these Cyber-terrorist attacks.

Guardians of Peace (Sony Hack)

On 24th of November 2014, an anonymous cyber group called "*Guardians of Peace*" hacked into Sony Pictures Entertainment network located in

⁷ S. Furnell and E. H. Spafford, "The Morris Worm at 30," *ITNOW*, vol. 61, pp. 32-33, 2019.

⁸ H. Orman, "The Morris worm: A fifteen-year perspective," *IEEE Security & Privacy*, vol. 1, pp. 35-43, 2003.

California. The objective of the attack was to stop Sony motion Picture from releasing a political satire movie about North Korea. The group not only leaked thousands of confidential documents of Sony Pictures but also erased about 100 terabytes of data, costing tens of millions of dollars to the company. Many theaters refused to screen the film after the attack and threats from the group. Sony Pictures was forced to stop releasing the film. The United States government condemned the act by officially attributing the attack as state-sponsored Cyber-terrorism by the government of North Korea⁹.

The Red October

"The Red October" was Cyber espionage campaign against government, research, and diplomatic organizations located in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia (the former USSR Republics). The attack was an Advanced Persistent Threat (APT) that was launched in 2007 and remained undiscovered until 2013. There is no clear evidence about the originators of the attack but the analytical reports suggested that the perpetrators were from a Russian-Speaking territory. Initially, the attackers targeted a selected group of people through spear phishing attack and then installed more sophisticated modules and software to accomplish the espionage mission. It is believed that the attackers managed to steal the sensitive information related to nuclear and energy groups, research institutions, and aerospace organizations¹⁰.

⁹ B. A. Walton, "Duties Owed: Low-Intensity Cyber Attacks and Liability for Transboundary Torts in International Law," *Yale LJ*, vol. 126, p. 1460, 2016.

¹⁰ K. Kromholz, H. Hobel, M. Huber, and E. Weippl, "Advanced social engineering attacks," *Journal of Information Security and applications*, vol. 22, pp. 113-122, 2015.

Stuxnet

Stuxnet was probably the most sophisticated cyber-attack that was launched to physically destroy the target (cyber-physical system). The attack was an APT, which was discovered in 2010. The analysis showed that the program has a number of advanced attacking parameters, such as exploiting zero-day vulnerabilities; and changing libraries, targeting Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) systems. Stuxnet was allegedly designed to target the Iranian nuclear project. It is believed that Stuxnet was injected into the targeted computers through a USB drive. The program first attacked the attached computer system and then infected the other computers in the network by exploiting the vulnerabilities. The ultimate target of Stuxnet was the machine controlling the centrifuges. The attack was severe enough to destroy 1,000 centrifuges out of 5,000 working at that time by changing their spinning speeds and altering the configurations¹¹. Some research studies indicate that the Stuxnet was a joint venture of the countries who wanted to destroy or slow down Iran's efforts to achieve nuclear capabilities, however there was no official statements by the countries claimed the responsibilities for the attack¹².

Dark Seoul (Operation Troy)

South Korea remained under a series of cyber-attacks from 2009 to 2013. In 2009, South Korea was hit with Distributed Denial of Service (DDOS) attack that resulted in discontinuity of a number of online services including the banking systems. A number of websites including Ministry of Defense,

¹¹ Z. Masood, R. Samar, and M. A. Z. Raja, "Design of a mathematical model for the Stuxnet virus in a network of critical control infrastructure," *Computers & Security*, vol. 87, p. 101565, 2019.

¹² M. Kenney, "Cyber-terrorism in a post-stuxnet world," *Orbis*, vol. 59, pp. 111-128, 2015.

Ministry of Public Administration and Security, National Intelligence Services, and major South Korean banking services remained blocked for six days. The U.S, an ally of South Korea, was also targeted in these attacks. New York Stock Exchange, Pentagon, and White House websites were also clogged in the attacks. The 2009 pattern of attacks was repeated in 2011 where the targets were government, military, and critical infrastructure websites including the network of U.S ground and Air Force in South Korea. In March 2013, the attackers were able to hack major South Korean banks and television stations. The attackers deleted the Master Boot Record (MBR) of tens of thousands of computers in these attacks. This series of attacks were named as “*Dark Seoul*” which later changed into “Operation Troy”. Operation Troy was attributed as an act of Cyber-terrorism since the main objective of these attacks was espionage and sabotage of organizations in South Korea¹³. South Korea blamed North Korea for these attacks.

Table 1 shows brief summary of the aforementioned attacks in terms of mission, Chosen targets, Impact, Motivation, and time before detection of attacks.

Table 1: Summary of Past Cyber Terrorism Attacks

Attacks	Mission	Target(s)	Impact	Motivation	Time Period
Guardians of Peace	Threat	Sony Pictures Headquarter	High	Ideological	2014
The Red October	Espionage	Eastern Europe and Central Asian (i) Nuclear and	High	Political	2007 - 2013

¹³ T. Feakin, "Playing blind-man's buff: estimating North Korea's cyber capabilities," *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies*, vol. 22, pp. 63-90, 2013.

		Energy Groups, (ii) Aerospace Organizations, (iii) Research Organizations			
Stuxnet	Sabotage	Iran Nuclear Program	Very High	Political	2007 - 2010
Dark Seoul	Espionage, Sabotage	South Korean Websites, Banks, TV stations	High	Political	2009-2013

Pakistan's Cybersecurity Approach (Challenges and Solution)

Pakistan is a developing country with strong geopolitical hold in South Asia. Pakistan has shown great commitment to boost its Information Technology (IT) sector. United Nations Conference on Trade And Development (UNCTAD) ranked Pakistan in top 10 booming digital economies in the world in its Information Economy Report 2017¹⁴. With the evolution of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), the security challenges of ICT and other critical infrastructure have also increased. The Cybersecurity challenges of Pakistan can't be analyzed fully without knowing the conventional security problems of Pakistan.

Conventional Security Challenges of Pakistan

The 2001 U.S invasion of Afghanistan changed the security paradigm of South Asia. Pakistan became an ally of United States against global war on

¹⁴ U. N. C. o. T. A. Development, "INFORMATIONECONOMY REPORT2017," https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/ier2017_en.pdf, 2017.

terrorism¹⁵. Pakistan had to pay a great price for becoming a part of the global efforts against terrorism. The non-state actors and states-sponsored terrorists managed to expand the epicenter of war from Afghanistan to the border areas of Pakistan, creating a political unrest and violence in the country. According to the U.S. National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), 84% of the total terrorism incidents (between 1970 -2014) in Pakistan occurred after the U.S led war against terrorism in 2001¹⁶. Pakistan suffered a lot in the war, losing over 60,000 precious lives with thousands of injuries and largest human displacement in the country¹⁷. Kashmir dispute between Pakistan and India is another reason of instability in South Asia. The confessional statements of the apprehended Indian spy, Kulbhushan Jadhav, are the proof of Indian involvement in creating political unrest and promotion of terrorism in Pakistan. Pakistan utilized all its resources to successfully fight the conventional war against terrorism since its rise in 2001. However, a bigger threat in the form of a hybrid war is yet to be fought by Pakistan to defeat the terrorism at Cyberspace front.

Cybersecurity Ranking of Pakistan

Cybersecurity challenges of countries can be determined by their preparedness to Cyber-attacks. Countries having solid Cyber defense face less challenges in Cyberspace. There is no specific method to measure the

¹⁵ M. U. Qaddafi and M. K. Afridi, "Contemporary Pak-US Relations in Post 9/11 Scenario," *The Pakistan Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 9, 2018.

¹⁶ M. K. Khan and L. Wei, "When friends turned into enemies: The role of the national state vs. Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in the war against terrorism in Pakistan," *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, vol. 28, pp. 597-626, 2016.

¹⁷ N. H. Khan, Y. Ju, and S. T. Hassan, "Modeling the impact of economic growth and terrorism on the human development index: collecting evidence from Pakistan," *Environmental Science and Pollution Research*, vol. 25, pp. 34661-34673, 2018.

Cybersecurity aptitudes of countries. However, there are some indicators that show states' willingness towards achieving enough Cybersecurity capabilities to mitigate Cyber-threats. One such indicator is the Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) by International Telecommunication Union (ITU). GCI ranks member states through analyzing their Cybersecurity commitment in five areas, namely legal, technical, cooperation, capacity building, and organizational. The *legal* pillar determines the legal frameworks and institutions that handle the Cyber incidents. The *Technical* capacity is analyzed through technical frameworks and institutions to deal the Cybersecurity. The *Cooperation* indicator evaluates the existing cooperative frameworks, partnerships, and information sharing networks. The *Capacity building* is the measure of research, development, training programs, certifications, and public sector organizations engaged in capacity building. The organizational pillar indicates the bodies that work for the development of Cybersecurity at national level. Pakistan's Cybersecurity challenges can be analyzed through its GCI ranking. To better understand Pakistan's commitment towards Cyber-secure country, the GCI ranking of the country is also compared with other neighbor developing countries including India, Iran, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh. The GCI has conducted three surveys so far.

The first survey was conducted in 2013/2014 with 105 countries that participated in the survey out of 193 ITU member states. The results of the first GCI survey were published in 2015. The global GCI ranking of Pakistan and the selected countries from the Asia Pacific region is presented in the following Table 2.

Table 2: GCI regional Ranking for 2013/2014

Countries	Pakistan	India	Iran	Sri Lanka	Bangladesh
GCI Ranking	23	5	19	15	19

The second GCI survey was conducted in 2016 and results were published in 2017. There were a total of 134 participating states in the second GCI survey. The rankings of the countries in second GCI survey are shown in the following Table 3.

Table 3: GCI Ranking for 2016

Countries	Pakistan	India	Iran	Sri Lanka	Bangladesh
GCI Ranking	66	23	59	71	53

There were a total of 155 countries in 2018 GCI survey. The global rankings of the five member states in 2018 survey are mentioned in Table 4.

Table 4: GCI Ranking for 2018

Countries	Pakistan	India	Iran	Sri Lanka	Bangladesh
GCI Ranking	94	47	60	84	78

Cybersecurity Challenges of Pakistan

Cybersecurity challenges of Pakistan can be analyzed through its GCI performance and Cyber-attacks on the country. The following Table 5 shows average GCI position of Pakistan and other countries in the aforementioned tables. The average position is calculated by using the following formula.

$$\text{Average Position of Country} = \frac{\text{Actual GCI Ranking} * 100}{\text{Participant Countries}}$$

Table 5: Average GCI Position of Countries

Year	Participant Countries	Pakistan	India	Iran	Sri Lanka	Bangladesh
2014	105	22	4	18	14	18
2016	134	49	17	44	53	40
2018	155	60	30	38	54	50

From Table 5, it is evident that Pakistan went to the declining state by gradually moving away from its initial average position. Table 5 gives a comparison of Pakistan with other countries.

GCI is one way of showing Pakistan's Cybersecurity challenges. There are a number of past incidents that suggest that Pakistan had a weak Cyber-defense system. According to Microsoft Malware Infection Index 2016, Pakistan was the top most vulnerable country in terms of Malware

infections in Asia Pacific countries¹⁸. Pakistan was also among the countries that were using Swiss encryption equipment called Crypto AG for secret communication. In a recent development it was found that the facility was secretly owned by Central Intelligence Agency, having the privileges of intercepting any communication¹⁹. Indian hackers are also a major threat to the national security of Pakistan. There are a number of past Cyber-attack attempts from Indian hackers with direct or indirect support of Indian government. For instance, Indian Cyber Army (ICA) is apparently a state sponsored organization of India that managed to hack a number of Pakistani websites in the past including National Accountability Bureau (NAB), National Database & Registration Authority (NADRA), and Pakistan Navy²⁰. These are few of the Cyber incidents that show that Cybersecurity is a big challenge for national security of Pakistan. The aforementioned Cyber-terrorist activities suggest that Pakistan is facing Cybersecurity challenges from different states or their proxies. There is no clear evidence of Cyber-terrorist attacks from independent Cyber-terrorist organizations.

Current Cybersecurity Infrastructure of Pakistan

It is important to analyze the current Cybersecurity infrastructure of Pakistan before advancing to the suggestions part. Pakistan has taken few positive steps in last two decades to improve its overall Cybersecurity posture. Pakistan has passed Electronics Transaction Ordinance, 2002

¹⁸ A. Rafiq, "Challenges of Securitising Cyberspace in Pakistan," *Strategic Studies*, vol. 39, 2019.

¹⁹ B. RECORDER, "Pakistan among countries who used Crypto AG secretly owned by CIA," <https://www.brecorder.com/2020/02/13/570633/pakistan-among-countries-who-used-crypto-ag-secretly-owned-by-cia/> (Cited on 4/2/2020), 2020.

²⁰ M. Shabbir, "Cyber Security in Pakistan: Emerging Threats and Preventive Measures," *ISSRA Papers 2013*, 2013.

(ETO). The purpose of this law was to give legal recognition to the information that exists in electronic form²¹. Although it provided legal acceptance to the electronic information, the Ordinance did not address the Cyber-crimes. In 2007, Government of Pakistan passed another ordinance called Prevention of Electronic Crimes Ordinance, 2007 (PECO). The notable sections of PECO include Cyber offences and punishments, prosecution and trials of the offences, and establishment of investigation and prosecution agencies that should deal with Cyber-crimes. Various forms of Cyber offences in PECO include Cyber-terrorism, unauthorized data interception, spoofing, spamming, Cyber-stalking, misuse of encryptions, misuse of electronics devices and systems, electronic forgery, electronic fraud, system damage, data damage, and criminal data access. Instead of creating a separate department for Cyber-crimes, the ordinance directed the federal government to establish a cell with Federal Investigation Agency (FIA)²². Amendments were made in PECO in the later years to refine different sections in the ordinance. A more comprehensive law in the form of Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016 (PECA) was approved in 2016. Cyber-crimes, punishments, establishment of investigation agencies, and roles and jurisdictions of Cyber investigations were defined in detail in the latest PECA, 2016²³. Other important Cyber-crimes related Acts and ordinances include The Electronic Transaction Act 1996 (ETA), Perspective Analysis of Cyber-Crime Act, 2006 (PACCA),

²¹ G. o. Pakistan, "Electronic Transactions Ordinance, 2002," <http://www.fia.gov.pk/en/ETO.pdf>, 2002.

²² G. o. Pakistan, "Pakistan Electronic Precention Ordinance, 2007," https://propakistani.pk/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/electronic_prevention_orde.pdf, 2007.

²³ G. o. Pakistan, "Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016," http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1470910659_707.pdf, 2016.

The Electronic Fund Transfer Act, 2007 (EFTA), Prevention of E-Crime Ordinance Act, 2013 (PECOA), and Electronic Documents and Prevention of Cyber Crime Ordinance Act, 2014 (EDPCCOA)²⁴.

Realizing the importance of security and privacy of digital services offered and used by various government departments Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Technology Board (KPITB) has initiated a project titled "Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cyber Emergency Response Center (KPCERC)". The purpose of the project is to fill up the cyber security need by establishing a center, which offers various cyber security services to public and private bodies in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and serves as technology support base for provincial government in domains of cyber security.

Proposed Cybersecurity Model for Pakistan

Despite some serious gaps and limited resources in hand for NR3C (National Response Centre For Cyber Crime), Pakistan has a tough legal framework to address the Cyber-crimes at national level. However, more work is required to enhance the capacity of the affiliate departments with trained human resource, multi-lateral data exchange agreements and robust judicial system to deliver anything meaningful against the PECA. The main drawback in Pakistan's current Cybersecurity posture is the absence of an independent authority that should deal with every aspect of Cybersecurity in the country. The current Cybersecurity infrastructure of the country works in bits and pieces. For instance, the notable department that deals with Cyber-crimes in Pakistan is National Response Centre for Cyber Crime

²⁴ Q. A. U. Haq, "Cyber Security and Analysis of Cyber-Crime Laws to Restrict Cyber Crime in Pakistan," *International Journal of Computer Network and Information Security*, vol. 11, p. 62, 2019.

(NR3C) that was established in 2007²⁵. Instead of working as an independent unit, NR3C works under another federal investigation agency.

The Figure 1 is the proposed conceptual model that has the potential to fulfill the existing gaps in Pakistan's current Cybersecurity infrastructure.

Figure 1: Proposed Cybersecurity Architecture



There should be a National Cyber Command Authority (NCCA) that should work as an independent body. The NCCA should be responsible for all legal as well as technical paradigms of Cybersecurity in the country. The authority should review and implement Cyber laws, compliance, and Cybersecurity operations throughout the country. Privacy and data protection should be the core responsibilities of NCCA. In terms of Cybersecurity operations, NCCA should have departments like National

²⁵ G. o. Pakistan, "National Response Centre for Cyber Crime," http://www.nr3c.gov.pk/about_us.html, 2007.

Cybersecurity Centre (NCC) that should monitor all the national and international level Cybersecurity threats. Under the National Cybersecurity Center, there should be National and Provincial Cyber Emergency Response Centers (CERT's). Provincial and National CERT's should work in coordination to aid the National Cybersecurity Center. The provincial CERT's can further be extended to Regional Cyber Units (RCU's) to assist the provincial CERT's. The NCC should collaborate with all the major stakeholders such as citizens, law enforcement agencies, private sector, vendors, etc. The NCCA should also work on Cybersecurity research projects to enhance the expertise and fill the Cybersecurity skills gap of its units.

Improving Cybersecurity through Cyber Range Concept

Another factor that can help Pakistan in improving its Cybersecurity posture is the Cybersecurity awareness and training. Cybersecurity awareness sessions and trainings should be organized to educate professionals and general public through dedicated test-beds, such as cyber ranges. Cyber ranges are virtual environments equipped with necessary tools to test, demonstrate, or simulate the Cybersecurity capabilities of individuals, groups, organizations, etc. Governments and defense agencies use cyber ranges to improve the security and performance of Cyber infrastructure, Information Technology, and other internet-dependent Communication systems and devices.

i. Cyber Range Architecture

A very basic Cyber range architecture is a physical or virtual (Cloud-based) environment having various components, such as simulation applications, monitoring tools, and computing devices. The simulation software generates attack scenarios (simulated networks) according to defined simulation environment. The simulation environment can be divided into defensive, offensive, or hybrid model. In defensive model, the professionals are given the defense related tasks, such as detecting vulnerabilities, blocking attacks, and responding to security breaches in simulated environment. In offensive model, the Cybersecurity experts are asked to penetrate into the simulated network that has specific vulnerabilities and defense layers. Another Cyber range approach is the hybrid model where the defensive and offensive capabilities of individuals are tested together. The Cybersecurity professionals are divided into blue (defensive) and red (offensive) teams with defined tasks. The attacks and defensive measures are usually monitored through a dashboard to assess the performance of individuals participating in Cyber range drills. Figure 2 shows a basic concept of a Cyber range.

Figure 2. Cyber range architecture



ii. *Cyber Range Features*

The Cyber range features define its scope and capabilities. The nominal Cyber range features include the infrastructure, environment, scenarios, tools, and load capacity.

- Infrastructure is the basic architecture of any Cyber range. It indicates the goals and capabilities of each Cyber range. For instance, the infrastructure of European Space Agency Cyber Range (ESA-CR) is specific to Space technology. The ESA-CR aims at providing detection, incident response, and Forensics related training and testing environment
- Cyber ranges usually consist of virtual environment where replicas of real world networks and systems are created. Simulators are used to replicate the real world environments in order to help security professionals mastering the skills of solving the same issues in real world as they happen.
- Scenarios are different situations in a Cyber range to carry out the tasks. Scenarios are usually created according to the demand of the Cyber range participants. For instance, a red team may require a vulnerable network scenario to hack into the systems. The investigation teams may require forensic scenarios.
- Instead of relying on simulators and computing machines, an advanced Cyber range may offer training through advanced propriety tools. Such tools are usually restricted to specific ranges. Some Cyber ranges may use open source tools that are common in many Cyber ranges.
- Load capacity refers to the number of participants that can use a Cyber range. Load capacity may depend on the Cyber range infrastructure. A

physically accessible Cyber range may have fixed capacity as compared to Cloud-based Cyber range. The Cloud infrastructure has default scalability and elasticity features that allow the extension of Cyber range load capacity depending on the requirement.

Pakistan can greatly benefit from the concept of Cyber ranges. Different government and security agencies can enhance their Cybersecurity skills by working in a controlled virtual environment to mitigate the real world Cyber-attacks in future. The country can either establish its own Cyber range that is accessible by all stakeholders or it can outsource the virtual environments from Cyber range solution providers.

Participation in Cyber Drills

Cyber drills are joint Cyber exercises similar to joint military exercises where the participants learn from each other's experience. The collaborative approach of Cyber drills help countries in establishing a readiness plan to deal with Cyber threats. Cyber drills are organized at state and enterprise level. In 2019, Estonia held a Cyber drill called *CYBER CoRe 2019*. Different international Cyber security companies, government institutions, and Estonian critical information infrastructure companies participated in the drills to share and learn from the joint Cyber security capabilities of participant organizations²⁶. In February 2020, Estonia held a state level Cyber drill among NATO member states legislators. The drill focused on detection and response to growing Cyber incidents²⁷. Beside countries,

²⁶ "Unique cyber exercise for the private sector is taking place in Tallinn," <https://estonia.com/cyber-exercise-for-private-sector-tallinn/>, 2019 (cited on May 2020).

²⁷ E. News, "Estonia holds NATO Parliamentary Assembly cyber crisis exercise," <https://news.err.ee/1037005/estonia-holds-nato-parliamentary-assembly-cyber-crisis-exercise>, 2020 (cited on May 2020).

organizations also arrange Cyber drills. The purpose of organizational level Cyber drills may vary, depending on the type of organization. For instance, the International Telecommunication Unit (ITU) arranges regional level Cyber-drills to enhance the Cybersecurity capacity, capabilities, and cooperation among participant countries²⁸.

Pakistan can enhance its Cyber capabilities by arranging Cyber drills with cooperating countries and world organizations. The collective Cyber drill approach can help the country in finding solutions by working on different security scenarios similar to real life threats to the national security of the country.

Conclusion

The ratio of Cyber-crimes has increased with the evolution of technology. The use of modern sophisticated Cyber tools is not limited to governments, organizations, or individuals working for the betterment and security of Cyberspace. The Cyber-criminals are an equal match in utilizing the Cyber-technology for rogue objectives. Some states are also involved in backing Cyber-terrorism to gain strategic advantages. The victims of Cyber-terrorism are both; the developing and the emerging countries. Despite a number of Cyber-attacks on Cyber-power countries, there is no global Cybersecurity law that should be applicable worldwide to stop Cyber-terrorism. In the absence of international law, many countries are working on their own Cybersecurity strategies to protect them from Cyber threats and contribute in securing the global Cyberspace. Many developing countries like Pakistan face Cybersecurity challenges due to regional and

²⁸ ITU, "Cyberdrills," <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Cybersecurity/Pages/cyberdrills.aspx>, (cited on May 2020).

international conflicts. Pakistan has strong defensive strategies against conventional form of terrorism. However, more work is required to improve the Cyber defense of the country. Ideally, there should be a National Cyber Command Authority (NCCA) that should take care of all Cyberspace operations, such as working on data protection laws, implementing Cybersecurity paradigms, ensuring Cyber compliance, and dealing with Cyber threats at national and international level. A Cyber-terrorism wing at National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) can help NCCA in increasing the Cyber situational awareness at national level. A vertical of Cybersecurity with appropriate workforce in NACTA can resolve this issue to a greater extent which should identify Cyber threats to national security, and devising policies and countermeasures accordingly. Shortage of manpower is one of the core reasons of declining state of Cybersecurity in Pakistan, skills and capacity enhancement programs should be encouraged and mandatory training for all federal and provincial employees working with digital systems or applications should be introduced. KP CERC is operational for last few years and has been successful in achieving its initial objectives however with effective compliance framework; it can be replicated at federal and other provinces.

Adil Adeel ,COMSATS University, Islamabad. He can be reached at adeel.infosec@gmail.com.

Rafi us Shan, Chief Cyber Security, KP CERC, KPITB, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He can be reached at rafi.shan@gmail.com.

About NACTA Journal

NACTA was established in 2008. Since then, it has played an important role to understand the dynamics of terrorism and extremism in Pakistan. It has spurred formulation of different policies for countering terrorism and violent extremism. NACTA has also taken substantial measures to advise the government in devising strategies to counter terrorist activities in the country. NACTA is based in Islamabad, Pakistan. Pakistan Journal of Terrorism Research is a peer reviewed bi-annual journal published by National Counter Terrorism Authority. The Journal provides a forum to the leading scholars and professionals in the field of counter- terrorism and security studies. NACTA has the sole copyrights to all the contributions and distribution of Pakistan Journal of Terrorism Research. Authors and contributors are responsible for the content of their submissions



NATIONAL COUNTER TERRORISM AUTHORITY PAKISTAN

www.nacta.gov.pk
+92-51-9216581