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Message from National Coordinator

I am delighted to announce the publication of second issue of National Counter Terrorism Authority's biannual journal, The Pakistan Journal of Terrorism Research. Research & Data (R&D) wing of NACTA strengthened institutional relationships with academic and research institutions. The practical manifestation of such relationship is the publication of current issue of journal.

NACTA's journal is a blend of intellectual input expressed by experts of counter terrorism and counter extremism working in NACTA and academicians from leading universities. NACTA journal accords equal importance to thinkers and practitioners in the domains of counter extremism and counter terrorism. Their input in the form of research papers will be a source of guidance for the parliamentarians, decision makers and implementers.

I am sure that Research & Data (R&D) wing, NACTA will carryout endeavors to make this journal more innovative and circulate in a manner that will help to reduce the gaps between policy and implementation.

I congratulate the editorial team and advisory board for making the publication of second issue of NACTA's journal a reality.



Mehr Khaliq Dad Lak
National Coordinator, NACTA

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Editor's Note

Carrying out research on topics related to terrorism and extremism is one of the key functions of NACTA. The publication of first edition of Pakistan Journal of Terrorism Research by National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) not only fulfilled the legal obligation but it also provided a platform to the experts of counter extremism and counter terrorism to express their opinion. The publication of first issue also formally linked NACTA with academic institutions and think tanks that was widely appreciated by different quarters. The second issue of the journal provides an insight of the dynamics of counter terrorism as well as of counter extremism.

The research papers in the journal have been contributed by the experts working in NACTA and the renowned researchers from the leading universities. The contents of these articles vary on a wide spectrum ranging from Terror Occurrences in Pakistan in the light of the Four Waves Theory of Terrorism, Challenges of Foreign Fighters in Pakistani Context, Rising Religious Urban Extremism in Pakistan and India and Critical Appraisal of Pakistan's National Narrative.

Second issue of NACTA journal will further enhance the reach and scope to cover transnational issues i.e. foreign fighters and most importantly why and how to amplify the national narrative, that will provide an inspiration and guidance to the policy makers for adoption of a whole-of-nation approach. This journal is also reflective of national resolve to combat terrorism and extremism at all fronts.

Critical Appraisal of Pakistan's Efforts in (Re) Constructing a National Narrative to Violent Extremism and Terrorism: A Case of Paigham-e-Pakistan

Muhammad Makki and Natasha Khan

Abstract

The inability of hard measures to effectively counter violent extremist ideologies and the resulting terrorism has generated a shift of focus towards soft measures. The area of soft countermeasures to violent extremism and terrorism, however, is a nascent field in comparison with its kinetic counterpart. In order to create a better understanding of the soft side of counter violent extremism, especially counter-narratives, a detailed inquiry into existing literature and practices is warranted. In doing so, this paper provides a brief understanding of the concepts of narrative and counter-narrative and further dwells into examining various efforts made at the international level. This is followed by a critical analysis of counter-narrative efforts initiated by Pakistan, in particular, the Paigham-e-Pakistan.

Keywords: narrative, counter-narrative, violent extremism, terrorism, Paigham-e-Pakistan, Pakistan

Introduction

Terrorism and related phenomena are an engaging subject matter, complicated to define and perhaps, even more, difficult to eradicate from societies. The recent wave of terrorism all over the globe and concomitant fight against it has resulted in the realization that hard measures alone are insufficient to defeat *ideas* that plague the minds of people. As a result, the focus of anti-terrorism and counter-terrorism efforts has shifted towards producing narratives to counter the ideologies propagated by terrorists and

extremists. There has been a realization that challenging narratives of violent extremism and terrorism are vital as an ideological response¹, which must complement and supplement the fight against terrorism². Resultantly, considerable efforts have been poured into the generation, formulation, and subsequent dissemination of counter-narratives to violent extremism and terrorism at the global level.

However, concerning violent extremism and terrorism, the field of counter-narratives remains considerably new territory for researchers, and more so, for policymakers. In addition, inevitable shortfalls in counter-narrative building and dissemination have been observed. The very first challenge observed is the inability of scholars and policymakers alike to define what exactly a counter-narrative *is*. However, understood broadly as a strategy to counter and refute the narratives produced and propagated by extremists and terrorists, the exact contours of counter-narrative remain ill-defined and often confused across countering violent extremism³. A second potentially problematic area is the alarming absence of scholarly reflections. That is to say that the issues concerning counter-narrative to violent extremism have remained largely the possession of policymakers and governments, with an only recent realization for integrating local communities and civil society. In addition, due to the lack of scholarly research, there exists little to no

¹ See e.g., "Countering Violent Extremism". (n.d.). <https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/focus-areas/countering-violent-extremism/>. See also, The Commonwealth, "Counter Narratives for Countering Violent Extremism," (n.d.). <http://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/inline/ComSec%20CVE%20Counter%20Narratives%20Presentation.pdf>

²For detailed information on Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee, please visit: <https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/focus-areas/countering-violent-extremism/>

³ Kate Ferguson, *Countering Violent Extremism Through Media and Communication Strategies A Review of The Evidence*, (UK: University of East Anglia, 2016), 1-40.

evidence regarding the effectiveness counter-narratives to violent extremism i.e., an assessment of the impacts on radicalized individuals, or the ability of a counter-narrative to prevent further radicalization and its various manifestations⁴. Similarly, the counter-narrative to violent extremism (as a phenomenon) has also come under criticism for ignoring the structural factors — the *enablers* — such as unemployment, poverty, (ethno-spatial) inequalities, and governance-related predicaments, that contribute towards the development of violent extremism⁵.

Pakistan's protracted fight against terrorism has resulted in a shared comprehension that the nation must also focus on the softer side of counter violent extremism and terrorism, especially by employing an effective counter-narrative. The plague of extremism seems to have taken deep roots in minds of not just those ready to take extreme action in the form of terrorism, but also those who sympathize with the phenomenon of (violent) extremism⁶. Therefore, Pakistan has well recognized the need for a consolidated national/counter-narrative to violent extremism and terrorism. In doing so, a comprehensive document — Paigham-e-Pakistan — was developed as *a national counter-terrorism narrative* by the collaborative efforts of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and the Council of Islamic Ideology, Pakistan⁷. The document contains the unanimous

⁴Andrew Glazzard, "Losing the Plot: Narrative, Counter-Narrative and Violent Extremism," *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism*, 2017.

⁵Eric Rosand and Emily Winterbotham, "Do Counter Narratives Actually Reduce Violent Extremism?" *Brookings*, March 20, 2019.

⁶Naveed Hussain, "Pakistan's Fight against Terrorism Far from Over," *Tribune*, (n.d.).
<https://newslab.tribune.com.pk/pakistans-fight-against-terrorism-far-from-over/>

⁷"HEC collaborates with CII," *Pakistan Today*, September 9, 2018.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/09/09/hec-collaborates-with-cii-for-paigham-e-pakistan/>

agreements of *ulema* (representing various sects of Islam).

As mentioned above, Paigham-e-Pakistan has the unique feature of containing the unanimous approval of religious scholars from all sects of Pakistan. In addition, it uses evidence from the two most revered Islamic texts—the *Quran* and *Hadith* in order to refute the ideology of violent extremism and terrorism and its monolithically constructed *truth*. However, in the context of Pakistan, it is important to understand that the phenomenon of terrorism (in its various forms) is highly complex and multifaceted in nature (see for e.g. Khan, 2016; Hameed, 2018)⁸. Therefore, it is imperative to carefully analyze the composition and validity of the counter-narrative that Paigham-e-Pakistan aims to present. This article explores issues that surround the practice of counter-narrative to violent extremism to explicate its functional dynamics. The aim of this article is not to laud Paigham-e-Pakistan. Instead, the purpose is to illustrate the factors that ensure the effectiveness of counter-narrative to violent extremism and terrorism. With regards, this article addresses specific themes (based on international practices) that provide a broad conceptual backdrop against which Paigham-e-Pakistan may be contextualized and analyzed. The presented analysis will be supplemented by interviews conducted with experts concerning the field of violent extremism and terrorism in Pakistan.

Understanding Narratives in the Context of Terrorism

A narrative is a key building block of any discourse, used to create or elicit

⁸ M. Sheharyar Khan, "Narrative of Counter-Narrative in Pakistan," *South Asian Voices*, July 13, 2016.

<https://southasianvoices.org/narrative-of-counter-narrative-in-pakistan/>

Masood Hameed, "The Need for a Counter Narrative," *Daily Times*, February 13, 2018.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/200673/need-counter-narrative/>

emotions and opinions. Klein (1999) defines narrative as being dependent on an audience and requiring an appropriate response: “a variety of techniques that at times indicate implicit or explicit evidence of the narrator’s preconceptions and aims” (p. 167)⁹. Looking at the aspects of narrative building, Rudrum (2005) brings to attention the way most definitions describe narrative as “the representation of a series or sequence of events” (p. 196)¹⁰. Braddock and Horgan (2016) further elaborated the term narrative as a cohesive account of events, with a discernible beginning, middle and an end¹¹. This posits that a narrative is an exchange or flow of *words* and *meanings* between the *narrator* and the targeted audience, and comprises of a clear sequence from *beginning* to an *end*. In addition, it has been well recognized that narratives have the capability to influence human thoughts. That is to say, narratives can influence the process of thinking: the way a person thinks about himself, his environment, and even the world at large. This (re)configuration of the thinking process at a micro-level further contributes towards the formation of a particular worldview, which has been referred to as a ‘grand’ or ‘master’ narrative¹².

Such worldviews or ‘grand’ narratives are all different forms of representations enabling the self to make sense of the world organized around its existence. Crew (1999) argues that such worldviews and

⁹ Harnet Klein, “Narrative”, *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 9, No.1/2 (1999),167-169. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43102456>

¹⁰ David Rudrum, "From Narrative Representation to Narrative Use: Towards the Limits of Definition," *Narrative* 13, No. 2 (2005), 195-204. www.jstor.org/stable/20107373.

¹¹ Kurt Braddock & John Horgan, “Towards a Guide for Constructing and Disseminating Counter Narratives to Reduce Support for Terrorism,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 39, No.5(2016), 381-404. doi: [10.1080/1057610X.2015.1116277](https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2015.1116277).

¹² Michael Mateas and Phoebe Sengers, “Narrative Intelligence,” *American Association for Artificial Intelligence Technical Report*, 1999.

<https://www.aaai.org/Papers/Symposia/Fall/1999/FS-99-01/FS99-01-001.pdf>

narratives may present different facets of *reality*, for those who believe in them¹³. Consequently, such narratives do not accommodate authoritative or totalizing discourses¹⁴. Such *rejectionist* tendencies are often exhibited in the violent extremist narratives; they often attribute veracity to their narratives as the only *truth* or *reality* while discarding any competing or existing narratives¹⁵.

Deconstructing the Narratives of Terrorism

The narratives propagated by terrorist organizations, such as Al-Qaida and ISIS, explicate the way the organizations view themselves with respect to the rest of the world. In addition, their narratives have significantly shaped the way their followers think and act. For instance, the narratives of Al-Qaeda and ISIS launched their mobilization around a constructed reality that was fundamentally against the West. These terrorist organizations have over time employed various themes emanating from the Islamic tradition to necessitate both the establishment and exercise of a unified Muslim community — i.e., the *Ummah*. This conceived unification fundamentally against the constructed and presented ‘others’ was being guided by the principles of Salafi-jihad, which both the Al-Qaida and ISIS consider the

¹³ Brian Crews, “Postmodernist Narrative: In Search of an Alternative,” *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses* No. 12, (1999), 19-36. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/16359515.pdf>

¹⁴ Brenda S.A Yeoh and Tou Chuang Chang, "The Challenge of Post-Modern Scholarship Within Geography," *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 10, No. 1 (1995), 116-30. www.jstor.org/stable/41056905.

¹⁵ Along similar post-modernist lines, the work of Baudrillard provides the concept of *hyper-reality*, which when applied to the conceptual understanding of violent extremist narratives, uncovers a pattern whereby extremist narrators transpose and reduplicate the historical Islamic context onto the contemporary world, thereby creating a new form of contemporary reality in line with their narratives (for a detailed explanation see Ryszard W. 2017 on Hyper-reality and Simulacrum).

purest face of Islam¹⁶. For instance, the ideologies of the organizations have been heavily influenced by ideologues such as Ibn Taymiyya and Sayid Qutb, both of whom held revisionist and reformist views (Sayid Qutab has been dubbed as the ‘Philosopher of Islamic Terror’). Claiming to be the vanguard of *true* Islam, the Al-Qaeda also called for such revisions and reform. The famous *fatwa* by Osama bin Laden encapsulates the narrative of Al-Qaida in the following words:

“The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies — civilians and military — is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it, in order to liberate the Al-Aqsa mosque and the holy mosque [Mecca] from their grip, and in order for their armies to move out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim. This is in accordance with the words of Almighty Allah: *and fights the pagans all together as they fight you all together, and fight them until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in Allah*”¹⁷

By tactfully combining propagandist material with religious interpretations, Al-Qaida was able to provide a single unifying narrative for its audiences¹⁸.

¹⁶Katherine Zimmerman, “Al Qaeda’s Strengthening in the Shadows,” *The American Enterprise Institute*, July 13, 2017.

<https://docs.house.gov/meetings/HM/HM05/20170713/106235/HHRG-115-HM05-Wstate-ZimmermanK-20170713.pdf>

¹⁷ “Jihad against Jews and Crusaders,” February 23, 1998.

<https://fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/980223-fatwa.htm>

¹⁸ Alex Schmid, “Al-Qaeda’s “Single Narrative” and Attempts to Develop Counter-Narratives: The State of Knowledge,” *ICCT Research Paper*, January 2014.

Similarly, ISIS has been successful in employing related rhetoric(s) in order to secure wider religious-driven support in the broader public realm. As an illustration, ISIS narrative communication specially designed *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* magazines¹⁹ (in the English language) in order to reach-out the (vulnerable) individuals living in the western countries. The magazines presented those (self-interpreted) *realities*, clustered around various themes of Islamic theology, which provided both the justification and motivation to consider the exercise of violence against the 'other'. More importantly, such kind of diversified narrative communication has an ability to tactfully manipulate the targeted audience in a selective manner²⁰.

Counter-Narratives to Violent Extremism and Terrorism

Understood simply, a counter-narrative is a narrative that has the potential to challenge, submerge, or neutralize an existing narrative. In the case of countering violent extremism, a narrative can offset the existing themes within the extremist narratives and thus reduce their ability to influence people, as argued by Braddock and Horgan²¹. Similarly, the United Nations (UN) Resolution 2354 states that "Counter-narratives should aim not only to rebut terrorists' messages but also to amplify positive narratives, to provide credible alternatives and address issues of concern to vulnerable audiences who are subject to terrorist narratives" (p. 3)²². The European

<https://www.icct.nl/download/file/Schmid-Al-Qaeda's-Single-Narrative-and-Attempts-to-Develop-Counter-Narratives-January-2014.pdf>

¹⁹ "Islamic State's (ISIS, ISIL) Horrific Magazine" (n.d.).

<https://clarionproject.org/islamic-state-isis-isil-propaganda-magazine-dabiq-50/>;

²⁰ Samantha Mahmood and Halim Rane, "Islamist Narratives in ISIS Recruitment Propaganda," *The Journal of International Communication* 23, No.1(2016),15-35. doi:10.1080/13216597.2016.1263231.

²¹ Braddock and Horgan, "Towards a Guide," 385.

²² Security Council, *United Nations*. Resolution 2354 (2017).

Union (EU) has also pushed for the building and dissemination of an effective counter-narrative to terrorism. It urged the formation of alternative narratives that not only challenge the themes around which the *truth* has been constructed but also expose contradictions with the underlying themes (through fact and logic)²³. Such an emphasis on generating effective counter-narratives suggests that the concerned counter-terrorism authorities have recognized the need for building effective barriers against terrorism, which must also be erected on ideological foundations²⁴.

International Approaches

Within the Muslim World, Saudi Arabia has taken important steps towards formulating a counter-narrative to violent extremism. In addition to establishing a 'Joint Task Force' and strengthening multilateral cooperation for combating terrorism, Saudi Arabia has actively pursued a policy of inter-faith dialogue. With regards, various conferences have been organized (in Mecca, Madrid, and New York) to highlight the importance of dialogue in promoting inter-faith harmony and inter-religious coexistence. Similar efforts were undertaken through the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), in order to present a united Muslim front to the problem of terrorism²⁵.

Other Muslim countries, such as Malaysia and Bangladesh, have also

https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2354%282017%29

²³ "Counter-Narratives to Terrorism", *Parliamentary Assembly*. Resolution 2221 (2018).

<http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML->

<en.asp?fileid=24810&lang=en>

²⁴ "Challenging Extremist Ideology, Propaganda and Messaging: Building the Counter-narrative," *East West Institute*, April 2015.

<https://www.eastwest.ngo/sites/default/files/ideas-files/Challenging-Extremism.pdf>

²⁵ Ali Asseri, *Combating Terrorism: Saudi Arabia's Role in The War On Terror* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009).

undertaken efforts to counter the outreach and influence of extremist narratives. For instance, Bangladesh has recognized the need to combat the growing number of Taliban sympathizers, both at the societal and political level. In response, preventive measures have been taken to reduce both the socio-political influence of various religious-based organizations and their ability to disseminate the violent extremist narrative, echoing the idea of Talibanization²⁶. Similarly, Malaysia has actively engaged itself to defeat the menace of terrorism. In addition to hard measures, Malaysia has adopted a three-pronged policy of 'Legislation', 'Rehabilitation', and 'Education' in order to counter violent extremism and its various manifestations²⁷. Indonesia is another important country that has boldly and strategically encountered the *idea* of violent extremism and terrorism. By doing so, the country has widely promoted the voices of those who have been victims of terrorism, or those who have been influenced by extremist narratives. The Indonesian authorities have employed such a form of personal storytelling as a counter-narrative to violent extremism and terrorism. In addition, dialogues with Islamic clerics and scholars have also been initiated as part of dispelling falsely constructed notions or interpretations of religion propagated by extremists²⁸.

Considerable counter-terrorism discourse has been generated in other parts of the world, including the US, EU, and Australia. The European

²⁶ Sreeradha Datta, "Islamic Militancy in Bangladesh: The Threat from Within," *Journal of South Asian Studies* 30, No.1(2007), 145-170. doi: 10.1080/00856400701264084.

²⁷ Muhammad Haziq Bin Jani, "Countering Violent Extremism in Malaysia: Past Experience and Future Prospects," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 9, No. 6(2017): 6-10, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26351526>.

²⁸ Elis Anis, "Countering Terrorist Narratives: Winning the Hearts and Minds of Indonesian Millennials", (2016).

<https://knepublishing.com/index.php/Kne-Social/article/view/2333/5159#info>

Parliament's Committee (2017) provides an in-depth overview of counter-terrorism efforts undertaken by various countries around the world. The year 2011 has been decisive as it brought together the international community (China, the Netherlands, the EU, United Arab Emirates [UAE], the UK, and the US) to establish a forum which can serve "[...] as a mechanism for furthering the implementation of the universally-agreed UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy" (p. 15)²⁹. Similarly, a 'Global Coalition Communications Cell' was formed in the UK (in September 2015). Bringing together all the coalition partners to form a single communications initiative to counter the narrative of violent extremism and terrorism. According to the British government, this effort has succeeded in countering the narrative of Daesh³⁰ while exposing the embedded contradictions and *falseness* within the Daesh narrative.

In 2010, the US also expounded efforts to establish the 'Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC). The center aimed to assemble a unified US narrative to counter the burgeoning influence of violent extremist ideologies. The objective was also to systematically deal with the online presence of such narratives and their proponents. Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN) is another important initiative where more than 3,000 practitioners are involved in analyzing and reviewing the practices for counter-narrative generation, while also extending services to those who engage in counter-narrative construction. Other global efforts in this regard

²⁹ Alastair Reed, Haroro J. Ingram and Joe Whittaker, "Countering Terrorist Narratives," *Policy Department for Citizen's Rights and Constitutional Affairs*, 2017. <https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Countering-Terrorist-Narratives-Reed-Whittaker-Haroro-European-Parliament.pdf>

³⁰ For further details, see 'UK Action to Combat Daesh': <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/daesh/about>

include the Against Violent Extremism (AVE) Network (a London-based initiative), which is committed to performing as a global force against violent extremism. It is indeed very interesting to observe that the AVE Network relies on the help of both former (violent) extremists and survivors of terrorism-related incidents. More importantly, the AVE Network has initiated several projects to exclusively deal with the issues of vulnerable youth, often described as 'at risk'. These projects include *Harakat-ut-Taleem* and *Average Mohamed*³¹.

While most of the above-mentioned counter-narrative related initiatives generated in Middle Eastern and Muslim countries focus on providing an alternate and *true* interpretation of Islam, the western discourse (both the EU and the US) primarily focuses on factors; such as extreme religious views, anti-modernism, socio-psychological and identity-based processes, and structural determinants of violent extremism (e.g., poverty, unemployment, [ethno-religious] horizontal inequalities, poor governance etc³²). Despite such commendable efforts, some areas still require significant attention. For instance, one of the most disregarded aspects is the *micro* or sub-divisions within and between key terrorist organizations: several internal divisions can now categorize the Taliban, where each *Shura* or division possesses its own objectives, often at a clash with others³³. This

³¹ Tanya Silverman et al., "The Impact of Counter Narratives," *Institute of Strategic Dialogue*, 2016.

https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Impact-of-Counter-Narratives_ONLINE_1.pdf

³² Richard Jackson, "An analysis of EU Counterterrorism Discourse post-September 11," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 20, No.2 (2007), 233-247. doi: 10.1080/09557570701414617

³³ "For Afghanistan, a Divided Taliban Poses an Obstacle to Peace," *Stratfor*, May 23, 2018.

<https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/afghanistan-divided-taliban-poses-obstacle-peace>

undoubtedly translates into different ideologies, and thus, requires very precise and focused efforts for counter-narrative work. Alongside fragmentation amongst the terrorist organizations, the counter-narratives to violent extremism and terrorism also fails to consider the cultural, ethnic, and social fault lines that are often exploited by various groups, thus reducing the efficacy of the counter violent extremism related efforts.

Making Counter-Narratives Work

Literature highlights the elements that should be considered to ensure the effectivity of counter-narrative(s) to violent extremism and terrorism. Here, in this section, we identify six main elements. First, literature widely argues that a counter-narrative must be both context-sensitive and specific. Although there have been commendable attempts to counter the underlying themes of terrorist narratives (both at the global and national level), most of the counter efforts overlook the root causes — the *enablers* — that are responsible for both the conditioning of violent extremism and creating its support-base. It has been further argued that counter-narratives to violent extremism have mainly been macro-focused, hence conveniently confined themselves to address only the religious and historical dimensions of Islam³⁴. Consequently, the Council of Europe (2018), in a draft resolution, recognized the significance of context-specific counter-narratives:

“The Assembly recognizes that a single, overarching counter-narrative cannot be developed. The complex construction of a multitude of different types of messaging

³⁴ see for e.g. Michele Grossman, “Disenchantments: Counterterror Narratives and Conviviality,” *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 7, No.3 (2014), 319-335.

and media, articulated around local issues and narratives is required in the creation of effective counter-narratives³⁵”.

In view of the above discussion, it is therefore pivotal to formulate a counter-narrative to violent extremism that is contextually defined or driven. Such a counter-narrative will have an ability to establish and position itself around the unique contextual ‘conditions’ or ‘enablers’, which contributed towards the manifestation of violent extremism or terrorism³⁶. An effective counter-narrative, therefore, must address such underlying contextual factors that lead to the manifestation of violent extremism.

Second, certain contradicting themes embedded within the terrorist or extremist narrative must be deconstructed. The ISIS or TTP narratives, for instance, propagate (re)modeling the targeted society on the rules of an Islamic *Sharia* or Caliphate. Exposing the discrepancies in their ideology and practices may then provide a relevant foundation for counter-narrative agenda and drive. To this end, Rundle and Anibaldi (2016) offer an interesting approach to countering the ISIS ideology by employing marketing tactics³⁷. They model the ISIS recruitment mechanisms on that of a successful advertising agency and suggest using counter-narratives of the same nature³⁸. Similarly, the Al-Qaida and TTP claim to be the only

³⁵ “Counter-Narratives to Terrorism,” *Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights*, United Kingdom: Council of Europe, (2018), 2.

<http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-DocDetails-EN.asp?FileID=24554>

³⁶ Christian Leuprecht et al., "Winning the Battle but Losing the War? Narrative and Counter-Narratives Strategy," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 3, No. 2 (2009), 25-35. www.jstor.org/stable/26298404.

³⁷ Sharyn Rundle-Thiele and Renata Anibaldi. "Countering Violent Extremism: From Defence to Attack," *Security Challenges* 12, No. 2 (2016), 53-64. www.jstor.org/stable/26465607.

³⁸ see for e.g. Braddock and Horgan, “Towards a Guide”

legitimate authorities of the socio-political and religious conduct. However, evidence from various terrorist-related activities revealed the contradiction or hypocrisy *within* their conduct by exposing their involvement in the drug trade and other illegal activities³⁹. Presenting similar evidence-based rebuttals can help to identify grey areas that will discredit the presented *reality* by introducing multiple micro-narratives instead of creating a generalized counter-narrative that may not resonate with its audience.

Third, hateful content must be controlled in its every form that may entice violence in multi-ethnic or religious societies (including online or other literature). This aspect has been well incorporated in the international counter-terrorism and counter violent extremism approaches. With regards, it is equally essential to recognize the emerging role of social media that has completely altered the operational and communication dynamics of terrorist organizations. For instance, the creation and presence of 'online spaces' or networks have offered the terrorist organizations a promising virtual space not only to recruit people but also to escape any scrutiny of the disseminated propaganda and hateful content (e.g., Malik, 2018)⁴⁰. Therefore, an effective counter-narrative must address such modern mechanisms containing

³⁹ Michael Jacobson, "Countering Violent Extremist Narratives," *National Coordinator for Counterterrorism*, 2010.

<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/opeds/4b7aaf56ca52e.pdf>

Vanda Felbab-Brown, "The Drug-Conflict Nexus in South Asia: Beyond Taliban Profits And Afghanistan," *Brookings*, May 20, 2010.

Muhammad Makki and Saleem Ali, "Gemstone Supply Chains and Development in Pakistan: Analyzing The Post-Taliban Emerald Economy in The Swat Valley," *Geoforum*, 100(2019), 166-175.

⁴⁰ Nikita Malik, "Hate Speech Still Spreads Too Easily Online: Here's How to Stop It," *Forbes*, October 12, 2018. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nikitamalik/2018/10/12/hate-speech-still-spreads-too-easily-online-heres-how-to-stop-it/#c34969653821>

propagandist and hateful themes⁴¹.

Fourth, it is important to re-apply and enhance the role of 'dropouts' (i.e., former terrorists) in developing a counter-narrative. To this end, an increasing number of studies highlight the importance of incorporating former terrorists into the process of counter-narrative generation. For instance, a London-based outreach program, 'Against Violent Extremism', employs the help of former extremists who became disenchanted with the ideology of their former groups/associations⁴². Indeed, such an approach has helped enlighten the youth (in particular) about the realities and consequences of participation in any kind of violence and extremism. It has been further noted that the shared experiences of former extremists can be incredibly helpful towards exposing another concealed reality behind the phenomenon of terrorism; including the moral uncertainties and dilemmas associated with religiously motivated violence⁴³.

Fifth, there is a greater need to exercise consolidated efforts, arising from the government itself. Several of the above-mentioned counter-narrative work has to emerge out of consolidated governmental approaches and efforts. However, certain scholars warn against the potential downfalls of this approach. Van-Eerten and colleagues (2017) state that governments suffer from a 'say-do gap', and it may be difficult for the public to re-orient

⁴¹ Agata de Latour et al., "WE CAN! Taking Action against Hate Speech through Counter and Alternative Narratives," *Council of Europe*, 2017. https://www.nohatespeech.at/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/WeCANmanual_FINAL_MAJ17032017.pdf

⁴² The detailed contents can be accessed online: <http://www.againstviolentextremism.org/>

⁴³ Michael Jacobson, "Terrorist Drop-outs: One Way of Promoting a Counter-Narrative," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 3, No. 2 (2009), 12-17. www.jstor.org/stable/26298402.

the established 'ideas'⁴⁴. They instead suggest a strengthened role of civil society, which should take the lead in not only developing but also exercising the counter-narrative to violent extremism and terrorism. Similarly, Subedi and Jenkins (2016) shed light on the role of a wide range of societal actors (women, civil society, local human rights organizations, local government authorities, and faith-based organizations) and suggest that these actors can greatly influence discourse at the local level due to their presence *within*⁴⁵. Russell and Rafiq (2016) also suggest the delineation of carrying out counter-narrative work, where governments can engage the civil society to increase outreach and lend credibility to counter-narrative programs at local levels⁴⁶. In addition to engaging local actors, the effectiveness of a counter-narrative can also be increased by targeting specific vulnerable segment(s) 'at risk' of a particular society. For instance, comprehensive guidelines provided by the Hedayah Institute (2014) recommend tailoring the message of counter-narrative in accordance with the specific audience and insists on engaging local communities in the

⁴⁴Janjaap van Eerten et al., "Developing social media response to radicalization: The role of counter-narratives in prevention of radicalization and de-radicalization," September, 2017.

https://www.wodc.nl/binaries/2607_Summary_tcm28-286137.pdf

Rachel Brigs and Sebastian Feve, "Countering The Appeal of Extremists Online," *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*, 2014.

<https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Countering%20the%20Appeal%20of%20Extremism%20Online-ISD%20Report.pdf>

⁴⁵ DB Subedi and Bert Jenkins. "Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: Engaging Peacebuilding and Development Actors," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 8, No. 10 (2016), 13-19. www.jstor.org/stable/26351459.

Ann-Sophie Hemmingsen and Karin Ingrid Castro, "The Trouble with Counter-Narratives," *Danish Institute for International Studies*, 2017.

<https://www.ft.dk/samling/20161/almdel/reu/bilag/189/1729101.pdf>

⁴⁶ Jonathan Russell and Haras Rafiq, "Countering Islamist Extremist Narratives: A Strategic Briefing," *Quilliam*, 2016.

https://www.academia.edu/30556016/Countering_Islamist_Extremist_Narratives_A_Strategic_Briefing

development of an effective counter-narrative. In the light of these arguments, counter-narrative related attempts that target a generalized or broad audience can prove to be counterproductive⁴⁷.

Paigham-e-Pakistan: The National Counter-Narrative to Violent Extremism and Terrorism

Pakistan's protracted fight against terrorism has resulted in a shared comprehension that the nation must also focus on countering and preventing aspects of violent extremism and in the ideological realm. Various scholars have identified that the plague of (violent) extremism has taken deep roots in the society, as a mean of offering a receptive space where certain vulnerable individuals and identities became sympathetic to extremists' agendas⁴⁸. Over time, this has led to the formation of a widespread albeit unofficial expression of delegitimizing extremist groups and their ideologies. However, the complex nature of extremism and resultant terrorism in Pakistan complicates this task by many-folds. Consequently, experts lay overbearing emphasis on the need for a national counter-narrative for Pakistan⁴⁹.

During the fieldwork, various respondents while discussing the need for, and the composition of the counter-narrative for Pakistan shared certain interesting views. For instance, one of our respondents contextualized the need for a counter-narrative to violent extremism as:

“[In countering terrorism] you first control all the mediums in

⁴⁷ Janjaap van Eerten et al., “The role of counter”

⁴⁸ Naveed Hussain, “Pakistan's Fight Against”

⁴⁹ Muhammad Feyyaz, "Why Pakistan Does Not Have a Counterterrorism Narrative," *Journal of Strategic Security* 8, No. 1-2 (2015), 63-78. www.jstor.org/stable/26465205.

order to formulate your own 'counter-narrative'. Therefore, this is what fighting an ideology means. We are not fighting in physical space only. This [terrorism] is a 'perception'. In ideological conflicts, it is not the reality; it is the perception, which matters. Perception is all in the abstract and the psychological domain [and] perceptions are built through narratives⁵⁰".

The first attempts at counter-narrative formation at the national level culminated in the form of 'Enlightened Moderation' during 2002. Presented by the then-president Musharraf, the *idea* of Enlightened Moderation was first unveiled at the OIC Summit Conference in Malaysia. However, it failed to gain much momentum beyond the sphere of discussion.⁵¹ This is particularly so as the reason the subsequent years witnessed no efforts towards the building or re-construction of another counter-narrative to violent extremism or terrorism. Efforts were renewed much later following the terrorist attack on Army Public School, Peshawar in 2014, which led to the creation of the National Action Plan (NAP)⁵². Though, not a counter-narrative in itself, NAP (with its 20 provisions) laid down the road for further policy measures that became responsible for the birth of Pakistan's first official national counter-narrative to terrorism, the Paigham-e-Pakistan. It was however, revealed during the fieldwork that though Paigham-e-Pakistan was formulated through intense stakeholder engagements and collaborations, it was the missing element of political ownership that kept

⁵⁰ Personal interview, January 10, 2019.

⁵¹ For details see "A Plea for Enlightened Moderation," *Washington Post*, June 1, 2004. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A5081-2004May31.html>

Stephen P Cohen, "Musharraf's Great Failure," *Brookings*, July 27, 2005. <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/musharrafs-great-failure/>

⁵² "National Action Plan, 2014," *National Counter Terrorism Authority*, Pakistan. (2014). <https://nacta.gov.pk/nap-2014/>

the document 'on hold' for a substantial period⁵³.

Launched on 16 January 2018, Paigham-e-Pakistan was the first of its kind; a unanimous agreement amongst religious scholars from the various sects of Islam. Bearing the signatures of over 1600 religious scholars, this 22-point religious decree (*fatwa*) was a collaborative effort between the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and the Council for Islamic Ideology (CII). While admonishing acts of terrorism as having no place in Islam⁵⁴, this 121-pager document states its goals in the following words:

“This unanimously agreed document titled, ‘Paigham-e- Pakistan’ prepared in accordance with the injunctions of the Holy Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet and the Constitution of Pakistan, reflects the collective thinking of the State of Pakistan. The Message identifies the problems faced by the State of Pakistan and provides a basis to devise a strategy to achieve the goals of Objectives Resolution. Moreover, through this Message, Pakistan is being projected as a strong, united, developed, cultured and modern nation in the international community. This consensus-based document shall be helpful to reconstruct Pakistani society whose core values are tolerance, spirituality, justice, equality, and balance in fulfilling rights and obligations”⁵⁵.

Paigham-e-Pakistan aims to address the phenomenon of terrorism and its various manifestations in Pakistan. The National Internal Security Policy, released during 2014, also necessitated the construction of a national

⁵³ Dr. Adnan Rafiq, personal interview, December 20, 2019.

⁵⁴ Mati, “Pakistan’s Counter-Terrorism Narrative,” *Dispatch News Desk*, January 19, 2018. <https://dnd.com.pk/download-paigham-e-pakistan-pakistans-counter-terrorism-narrative/138145>

⁵⁵ Paigham-e-Pakistan. *Islamic Research Institute Press*. (2018), IX.

narrative on extremism (NISP, 2014): “Constructing a robust national narrative on extremism, sectarianism, terrorism, and militancy is the cornerstone of an ideological response to non-traditional threats”⁵⁶. Likewise, the second updated version of the policy (NISP, 2018) predicates, “reimagining of the society as a tolerant, inclusive and democratic polity will be pursued in order to strengthen a shared vision for the nation” and further emphasized on the “shared values of acceptance of diversity, debate, and tolerance” in the very fabric of the society⁵⁷.

The realization of these policies in the form of Paigham-e-Pakistan has evoked many positive responses. It has been praised as an umbrella and shield, which can protect Pakistan from all forms of (violent) extremism. It has been pronounced a step in the right direction that can help to encounter all challenges posed by terrorism and extremism, including the role of sectarian-based conflicts⁵⁸. It has been further recognized as providing a basis for the promotion of a soft and positive image of Pakistan, and as possessing the ability to bring together the diverse segment of the society under the shared values of tolerance and peace⁵⁹. To promote the message of the Paigham-e-Pakistan, the National Counter Terrorism Authority

⁵⁶ National Internal Security Policy I. *Ministry of Interior. Government of Pakistan. Pakistan. (2014),7.*

⁵⁷ National Internal Security Policy II. *Ministry of Interior. Government of Pakistan. Pakistan. (2018),45.*

⁵⁸ “Govt unveils Paigham-i-Pakistan; fatwa against terrorism,” *Dawn*, January 16,2018. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1383306>

Rasheed Khalid, “Paigham-e-Pakistan a shield against extremism: MNA,” *The News*. January 26,2019. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/423787-paigham-e-pakistan-a-shield-against-extremism-mna>

⁵⁹ Fawad Maqsood, “National narrative ‘Paigham-e-Pakistan’ a right step to end terrorism: President,” *Business Recorder*, January 16, 2018.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2018/01/16/393336/national-narrative-paigham-e-pakistan-a-right-step-to-end-terrorism-president/>

(NACTA) has played an instrumental role in organizing several workshops, seminars, and conferences across the country. These platforms have focused on addressing educational institutions and stressing upon the need to build a tolerant and peaceful society, and securing the ideological borders of the country from the threats of extremism⁶⁰. The focus has also been on the role of the youth and educational institutions in countering and preventing violent extremism.

However, certain respondents who were interviewed for this research raised some concerns over the process of stakeholder engagement towards formulating Paigham-e-Pakistan. The following debate analyzes Paigham-e-Pakistan in order to identify some of its other strengths and weaknesses.

Engaging Local Bodies and Civil Society

Indeed, Paigham-e-Pakistan has successfully incorporated the religious element into its substance. In particular, the faith-based organizations are well noticeable in the extensive list of names of religious *ulema* and *muftis* (representing various schools of thought) involved in the making of the national counter-narrative. In addition, it is important to notice that the Paigham-e-Pakistan incorporates the opinions and agreement of over 1600 officials, nation-wide, belonging to various political, religious, and academic groups. This has helped to lend the text legitimacy by ensuring diverse religious and social representation(s).

However, in view of broadening further engagement in formulating a national/counter-narrative for Pakistan, Mossarat Qadeem (counter violent

⁶⁰ “Workshop under Paigham e Pakistan initiative highlights role of faculty members, Ulema in peace-building”. October 2, 2018, <https://uos.edu.pk/news/post/Two-days-workshop-under-Paigham-e-Pakistan-initiative->

extremism expert), mentioned that the relevant institutions (such as NACTA) needed to engage with broad civil society in order to develop a comprehensive narrative against terrorism⁶¹. Whereas further commenting on the need for greater engagement between the society and state, another respondent stressed the need for joint collaborations and actions, at both societal and state levels. He suggested that such collaborations must be made imperative if counter-narrative is to be brought to effective implementation⁶². This suggests that Paigham-e-Pakistan and related initiatives must continue engaging the broader civil society actors to ensure the effectiveness of counter-narrative to violent extremism and terrorism.

Targeting Themes and Delegitimizing Personalities

Paigham-e-Pakistan has adequately targeted one major theme of violent extremism in Pakistan, i.e., 'Jihad against the state'. Quotations from both the *Quran* and *Hadith* are used to draw a critical commentary on the various facets of the extremist actors and involved processes. For instance, the document highlights the various verses from religious sources condemning violent acts, and declares them anti-state and subject to the harshest punishment, both in the eyes of state and religion. With regards, Section 3.2 of the Paigham-e-Pakistan details the illegitimacy of war waged against the state institutions, and innocents from the public. Following this, Section 3.4 deals with misinterpretations of jihad and the conditions surrounding it. It urges the iniquitousness of jihad against the state and its residents without due cause, legitimacy, and authority. In a similar argument, it also elaborates on the various historical contexts (from which many extremist narratives

⁶¹ Personal interview, December 20, 2019.

⁶² Personal interview, January 17, 2019.

draw their inspiration) and contends that these should not be used as a foundation or historical 'point of reference' for contemporary violent action.

Countering Hate Speech

In addition to demystifying actors and processes, policy documents further suggest addressing the root causes of the spread of extremist narratives, which can be traced back to hate speech very often. In this view, the fifth point within the National Action Plan (NAP) stresses the need to address hate speech and make it clear that the state will not tolerate any kind of hate speech, and serious actions will be taken against those involved in such activities (NAP, 2014). This reaffirms the realization that the need for action against hate speech is necessary as it propels extreme *ideas* into extreme *actions*. Nevertheless, one of our research respondents drew attention towards the complexity of the issue:

“[...] by only ‘banning’ the hate speech, the government cannot end the phenomenon [of violent extremism], what they end up doing is, they banned hate speech, not the hate. You have to remove hate by intervening in the social domain, intervening in society, by changing people’s behaviors”⁶³.

Furthermore, different sectarian-based outfits use hate speech against other sects and religious groups as a way to dehumanize others⁶⁴ and subsequently legitimize their violent actions in Pakistan. Building on this debate, Rumi

⁶³ Personal interview, December 20, 2019.

⁶⁴ Christine Fair et al, “Democratic Values and Support for Militant Politics: Evidence from a National Survey of Pakistan,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 58, No.5 (2013),743-770.

outlines the nature of such sectarian outfits as incongruent and antagonistic, legitimizing their actions and existence as an antithesis of one another⁶⁵. To counter this, Paigham-e-Pakistan declares the propagation of hate speech and dehumanization of *others* as strictly forbidden by the religion of Islam. Section 3.3 of the document deals with this subject in detail while borrowing supporting pieces of evidence from the Quranic text. It strictly urges against the sanctimonious declarations and propagation of sectarian-based rulings (the *fatwas*). Hate crime against other sects is also strongly reproached. Paigham-e-Pakistan also addresses the usage of loudspeakers and other forms of public pronouncements of demeaning and hateful speeches, and strictly condemns all such acts. It calls for building a society based on the tolerance (of others) while prohibiting individuals, (religious) identities or groups from enforcing their beliefs or *will* upon others. Similarly, the document details the role of schools and educational institutions (including religious institutions), as places of learning *only*. It condemns involving them in the spread of hateful material and learning.

These insights into the Paigham-e-Pakistan reveal a truly unprecedented achievement on the part of Pakistan. The sheer numbers of religious scholars, who have been included in the list of signatories and formulators, seem an achievement indeed in drawing broader consensus (Salman, 2019)⁶⁶. However, it remains to be seen if the success on paper can be

⁶⁵ Raza Rumi, "Peace Must Win," in *Rethinking Pakistan: A 21st Century Perspective*, ed. Bilal Zahoor and Raza Rumi. (Lahore, Pakistan: Folio Books, 2019), 287-298.

⁶⁶ Visal Saleem, "Paigham-e-Pakistan: The Strong Peace Narrative that Attracts the Support of Extremist Ulema," *Modern Diplomacy*, May 7, 2018. <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2018/05/07/paigham-e-pakistan-the-strong-peace-narrative-that-attracts-the-support-of-extremist-ulema/>

translated to success in reality. In this regard, certain discrepancies can be observed in the case of Paigham-e-Pakistan — as a national counter-narrative to violent extremism and terrorism. Such discrepancies might not seem very problematic at first glance, but the present research indicates that they can severely impact the ability and effectiveness of Paigham-e-Pakistan.

Assessing the Contextuality of Paigham-e-Pakistan

The existing literature points towards addressing root causes — the conditions — as a vital success factor for any counter-narrative to violent extremism and terrorism. With regards, Paigham-e-Pakistan can be characterized as indeed context-specific. It explicates upon sectarianism, which has been a growing cause of violent extremism in Pakistan; however, it falls short of addressing the root causes of terrorism in Pakistan (as indicated in 2.3 & 2.4). Research on the growing religious militancy in Pakistan identifies increased horizontal inequalities and the related phenomenon of failure of the social contract between the state and its citizens as one of the key motivations behind violent (identity or group) mobilization⁶⁷.

Recent talks on ‘Actualization of National Narrative’⁶⁸ stressed upon the need to create synergy between the national counter-narrative and the

Uzair Salman, “Paigham-e-Pakistan in need of a Novel Reappraisal,” *The Nation*, January 9, 2019. <https://nation.com.pk/09-Jan-2019/paigham-e-pakistan-in-need-of-a-novel-reappraisal>

⁶⁷Sadia Malik, “Horizontal Inequalities and Violent Conflict in Pakistan: Is There a Link?” *Economic and Political Weekly* 44, No.34(2009), 21-24.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260467704_Horizontal_Inequalities_and_Violent_Conflict_in_Pakistan_Is_There_a_Link

⁶⁸ *Actualization of National Narrative*. One Day National Conference (March 28, 2019), Pakistan House – Think Tank of International Affairs, Islamabad, Pakistan.

realities of Pakistan; if we expect to achieve any success in the present context of the country and to avoid 'clash of narratives in the country' ⁶⁹. While emphasizing on the need to eradicate certain divisions and for unified identity, one of our key respondent who served as a senior military official and was actively involved in the counter-terrorism operations stated that:

“[...] before efforts are poured into the creation of a counter-narrative, the state must agree on a singular, unified and unchallenged narrative of 'Pakistaniyat' which can provide a strong ideological foundation for the country to counter the pervasive threats of extremism and terrorism”⁷⁰.

The Role of Government

Related to the above-mentioned factor is the role of the government. It has been widely suggested that the government should not act as the primary *source* or *generator* of a counter-narrative, as it may suffer from a 'say-do gap', which can provide the basis for challenging the legitimacy of any counter-narrative work carried out by the government.

The Role of Former Extremists or Terrorists (the Dropouts)

A considerable amount of literature also points to the role of dropouts or formers in the building and the dissemination of a counter-narrative to violent extremism and terrorism. The underlying rationale for this stems from the ability of previously disenchanted *jihadists* to be a legitimately convincing source of deterrence, and their ability to provide a realistic view of contemporary Jihad. Paigham-e-Pakistan does not indicate having

⁶⁹ Akbar Nasir, personal Interview, January 30, 2019.

⁷⁰ Personal interview, February 04, 2019.

incorporated any opinions of this sort. The reason for this could perhaps be attributed to the sensitive nature of operations, and the reticent status of actors related to violent extremism and terrorism. Perhaps, the only area where one can find traces of these formers is in the list of the religious signatories of the document, Paigham-e-Pakistan. Hence, this paper argues that Paigham-e-Pakistan — as a national counter-narrative to violent extremism and terrorism — must address this dimension in order to lend additional strength to its message.

Target Audience

In addition to the above-highlighted elements, the existing discussion on the effectiveness of counter-narratives to violent extremism and terrorism underlines the need for focusing on a specific target audience for increased effectiveness in battling (violent) extremist ideologies. Several international approaches mentioned earlier (see Section 2.3), warns against the overly generalized audience. Again, understandably, a national counter-narrative is meant for the entire nation, which may cause it to exhibit certain generalizations; nevertheless, Paigham-e-Pakistan seems to be a rejoinder against the anti-Islamic or anti-state rhetoric employed by critics of the Pakistani state and its institutions. This reminder is provided to the readers at large and does not target any demographic(s), explicitly.

A related factor that has not been considered in the development of the national counter-narrative is *language*. The narrative has been primarily presented in English and Urdu. However, considering that large numbers of mainly rural populations of Pakistan may be unable to comprehend the literary composition of the document, this seems to be a serious flaw. It may be prudent to translate the document into the various local languages such

as Sindhi, Balochi, Pashto, Saraiki, while also considering alternative ways of broader dissemination. Indeed, Paigham-e-Pakistan is currently being disseminated in several universities via conferences and workshops; however alternative ways must be discovered to improving its content(s) to reach wider audiences at the national level. The very fundamental reason for this stems from providing an understanding of the national (counter) narrative to violent extremism and terrorism at the local level throughout the country.

Conclusion

This paper provided certain understandings of the concepts of narrative and counter-narrative to violent extremism and terrorism. The focus here is explicitly drawn to extremist narratives and possible methods to counter their ideologies. While the deconstruction of extremist narratives has been in practice for a while, this paper attempts to take apart and analyze the counter-narrative of Pakistan against (violent) extremists' narratives. The case of Pakistan offers a veritable specimen of counter-narrative work. A look at Paigham-e-Pakistan reveals that although it has made a commendable attempt at addressing some of the factors leading to violent extremism in the country, it remains largely very one-dimensional. Herein, rests the issue of 'efficacy' versus 'effectiveness'.

At first glance, the Paigham-e-Pakistan seems to be a very inclusive and wholesome narrative, as a counter-narrative against the one propagated by violent extremists. However, diminutive scrutiny reveals some glaring discrepancies. The phenomenon of violent extremism and terrorism in Pakistan is complicated and intricate in the way that it transcends the conventional and contemporary understandings of religiously motivated

violence and related extremist ideologies or (extreme) actions. It spans over various actors, events, and causes. It is imperative therefore, that any attempts made to counter such extremist narratives and to shake the foundations of their ideology and pervasive travesties, be made with extreme caution and the utmost attention to detail.

The arguments presented in this paper indicate that there is a further need for a critical assessment of Pakistan's national counter-narrative to violent extremism and terrorism. Exercises broadly addressing only a few basal and recurring themes cannot hope to trump extremist narratives. The findings that emerge suggest revisiting the attempts made by the state at generating a counter-narrative. As identified by literature and expert opinions, a counter-narrative cannot hope to gain any success if it fails to acknowledge the contextual realities of the audience and environment, which it aims to influence. The case of Pakistan especially embodies a host of complications, whereby the apparently religious extremism is fueled by various sectarian, political, economic and ideological grievances and aspirations. Exhaustive and extensive research is required to identify and explore the existing gaps, which permit manipulation(s) by extremist actors and their ideologies. As identified in the paper, the concepts of narrative and counter-narrative, do present some very perplexingly interrelated ideas. A more detailed look into the narratives propagated by terrorist and extremist outfits reveals the artistry behind the formulations of such narratives. This demands that counter-narratives also display a certain level of convolution to rival the narratives that they set out to debunk. Nevertheless, this may be an arduous task, considering the need to account for diverse audiences and heterogeneous contexts.

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Terror Occurrences in Pakistan: Is it in Waves or Strains?

Dr. Kashif Hussain

Abstract

In the early decade of twenty first century, violent activities of religious fundamentalists increased in fragile states. Waves theory of terrorism explained cyclic progression of terrorism and propagation of terrorist related activities from 1880 till first decade of twenty first century. The main focus of theory was the acts perpetrated by militant, violent and extremist groups of individuals emerged in waves of ideologies. Strains theory of Terrorism has been presented which has provided an alternative explanation about progression of terrorism. The main theme of this theory has been organizational context of terrorist organizations who interact regularly with direct competitors, learn from both their own and their rivals' success. This study is the historical analytical study of terrorism in Pakistan, keeping the theoretical frame work of both theories. It has been explained that Pakistan is currently going through Religious Wave and Social exclusion stages of proposed theories.

Keywords: Terrorism, Pakistan, Waves Theory, Strains Theory, Terrorism in Pakistan

Introduction

In the early decade of twenty first century, the occurrence of violent activities related to elements from the religious fundamentalist increased in particularly those areas where the state was fragile. One of those area was Pakistan, which was indirectly involved in the global wave of terrorism. The

cover page of Newsweek weekly edition of 22nd October, 2007 had marked the worries of those who thought Pakistan to be a state not only supporting violent religious fundamentalist but also was shielding them from the external global powers. The title headline of the cover read “*The Most Dangerous Nation in the World is not Iraq. It’s Pakistan.*” In the succeeding years Barak Obama, the then President of United States in 2009, had to review the policy regarding deployment of forces in Afghanistan due to some facts which were:

*“Al Qaeda and its allies – the terrorists who planned and supported the 9/11 attacks – are in Pakistan and Afghanistan... They have used this mountainous terrain as a safe haven to hide, to train terrorists, to communicate with followers, to plot attacks ...For the American people, this border region has become the most dangerous place in the world. But this is not simply an American problem... The safety of people around the world is at stake.”*¹

Pakistan has been allegedly accused and termed as “both a major victim of terrorism and a major sponsor of terrorism”². The trend of labelling Pakistan as “the most active sponsor of the terrorism”, using proxy warriors to gain strategic depth, started, and is continuing trend, since the start of Afghan War (1979-1988)³. Due to proximity of two of its volatile neighbors, Pakistan has been embroiled in the Inter-state politics in the global arena.

¹ "Remarks of President on Afghanistan and Pakistan.", White House Press Release, Washington, DC., March 27, 2008.

² Bruce Riedel. *Pakistan and Terror: The Eye of the Storm*. Washington, DC.: Brooking Institution, 2008.

³ Daniel Byman, *Deadly Connections: States That Sponsor Terrorism*. Cambridge University Press, 2005.

With the initiation of global jihadi movement masses of “*Mujahedeen*” joined the fight against the *Red Devil*, like the call of crusader by Pope Urban-II in 1095, with goal of freeing the land of Muslims from the grip of Communist regimes. The change of guards in Afghanistan with the ouster of King Zahir Shah, a seemingly moderate King of Afghanistan, replaced by his cousin Daud Khan which after coming into power started an agitation in the name of Pakhtun Nationalism⁴. Pakistan had been alleged to covertly sponsoring radical elements of Afghan society that had the anti-communist and anti-state ideologues since 1975⁵. Pakistan had remained a “refuge to several insurgent leaders, who, in just a few years, would command Pakistan-based “*Mujahedeen*” (freedom fighters) groups opposing the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and indigenous communists”⁶.

In the context of Pakistan being a victim of terrorism, it is necessary to have a historical overview of terror related activities in Pakistan. This article is subdivided into four sections. Section 1 provides the introduction. Section 2 provides the basic outlay of the two theories of terrorism: Four Waves Theory of Terrorism by David C. Rapoport and Four Strains Theory of Terrorism by Tom Parker and Nick Sitter. Section 3 highlights the various stages of terrorist activities in Pakistan in the context of both theories. Section 4 concludes the article.

The Four Waves Theory of Terrorism

In the world that is riddled with new forms of knowledge, study of terrorism

⁴ Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The US and the Disaster in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia*. New York: Penguin Books, 2008.

⁵ M G Weinbaum, & J B Harder, "Pakistan's Afghan policies and their consequences. *Contemporary South Asia*." 16, no. 1 (2008): 25–38.

⁶ *Ibid*

is gaining momentum. In the ever-growing body of knowledge in the field of security studies David C. Rapoport gained fame with his Theory of Four Waves of Terrorism.⁷ His Four Waves Theory of Terrorism was linked with Arthur Schlesinger's theory of Political Generations. Schlesinger has proposed 40 years generation cycle for the American Presidential Election, and further suggested that there were waves of political and social activism followed by a wave of retrenchment when the people were focused on material gains and economic wellbeing of self and family⁸. This cycle would repeat and so on and so forth. However, Schlesinger was unable to predict if there was any bridge between the historical context and the political aspirations of the generations. David Rapoport categorized the waves, into four;

- "Anarchist Wave" started in 1880s which lasted for over four decades.
- "Anti-Colonial Wave" in the early 1920s which had largely died down and dissipated by late 1960s.
- "New Left Wave" took shape in the last leg of 1960s which continued well into the 1990s.
- "Religious Wave" began with Soviets taking practical control of the State of Afghanistan in 1979⁹.

The main focus of Rapoport were acts perpetrated by militant, violent and

⁷ David C Rapoport, "The Four Waves of Rebel Terror and September 11." *Anthropoetics* 1, no. 8 (2002).

⁸ A M Schlesinger, *The cycle of American History*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986.

⁹ Ibid.

extremist groups of individuals which came in waves of ideologies. The origin of Anarchist Wave was the shooting of Colonel Fyodor Trepov by Vera Zasulich in 1878 and the trial of Vera where she declared, "I am anarchist, not a terrorist"¹⁰. This wave continued to spread to Europe and Americas where it was rechristened as Workers Movement. Rapoport viewed the commencement of the first wave because of two factors: doctrine and technology. The Nechaev's strategy of terror in Revolutionary Catechism acted as a guide to terrorist organization Narodnaya Volya ("The People's Will"). To fill the void, terror as a "new form of communication" was employed; weapon who could be undetected to naked eye but inherently present in mind's eye. For Anarchists, terrorism was "a strategy, not an end", and they employed tactics specially tailored to the context and the objective they wanted to achieve¹¹.

The next wave, "the Anti-Colonial Wave", occurred right after the culmination of the First World War. The anti-colonists, in view of Rapoport employed different techniques learnt from the Anarchists to achieve their goals: the birth and rise of hit and run tactics later known as Guerrilla War. Another development in the Anti-Colonial wave was that the term terrorist was used to describe "all violent rebels as terrorists".

The Vietnam War stated the "New Left wave" where "radicalism was often combined with nationalism". The New left wave can be regarded as the Neo-Anarchist wave as it combined the tactics of anarchist to achieve international recognition and international outreach, thus creating the

¹⁰ Ana Siljak, *Angel of Vengeance: the "Girl Assassin," the Governor of St. Petersburg, and Russia's Revolutionary World*. 2008.

¹¹ Op Cit Rapoport, David. 2002

phenomenon of “international terrorism”. The New left wave saw changes of not only tactics but also techniques. Plane hijackings, terrorist strikes on foreign embassies and kidnapping became the tactics used by the rebels, terrorists and other groups with impunity.

At the tail end of the New Left Wave, a parallel wave had started to take its shape. This was the Religious wave. In earlier waves religious identity, Rapoport has asserted, was important, and often overlapped with religious-ethnicity, but the aim had always been the creation of secular sovereign state. In addition to assassinations, and hostage taking, the innovation of Religious Wave has been Suicide Bombings which asserted the martyrdom theme of the first wave, neglected by the other two waves. Another important innovative tool which was used in this wave was creation of a unique organization in its recruitment and purpose: the creation of Al-Qaeda and Global Jihad. In conclusion, Rapoport has warned that

“This history shows that the inspiration for a terrorist wave may dry out in time, and that resistance can destroy organizations or make them ineffectual. But alas, it also demonstrates that the terrorists regularly invent new ways to conduct their activities”¹².

Rapoport used a very unique approach where he treated each wave not only in political context but also the violence associated with it. His work was culmination of his previous works where his focus was on ancient world and

¹² Ibid

the development of political violence¹³. His works later inspired the scholars to work on the study of terrorism and the religious connotations tied to it^{14,15}. Rappaport has the advantage of prediction of the next waves of terrorism as he has looked into the historical events as waves, rather just an anomaly.

The Four Strains Theory of Terrorism

The main follow-up or criticism on the wave theory of Rappaport was by two scholars of terrorism studies Tom Parker and Nick Sitter.¹⁶ After acknowledging the Rapoport's prediction of the rise of Religious Wave which according to Rappaport would dissipate by year 2025 and providing basic frame work for academic discourses, they found a slight flaw in Rapoport's theory which is due to his assertions that "each wave as having an international character" "driven by a predominant energy" which results in "a cycle of activity...characterized by expansion and contraction..." and "when a wave's energy cannot inspire new organizations, the wave disappears"¹⁷. The main critique by them is that "the strategic and tactical choices terrorist organizations make play an important role in the evolution of terrorism" which Waves theory fails to provide as each type of terrorism

¹³ For further details please see his article "Mosses, Charisma, and Covenant" published in *The Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Jun., 1979), pp. 123-143, is said to be the pioneer in the study of terrorism in historical context.

¹⁴ Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the mind of God: The global rise of religious violence*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

¹⁵ J Kaplan, "David C. Rappaport and the study of religiously motivated terrorism." In *Terrorism, identity and legitimacy: Four waves theory and political violence*, by J. Rosenfeld, 66-84. New York: Routledge, 2011.

¹⁶ Tom Parker and Nick Sitter. "The Four Horsemen of Terrorism: Its not waves, its Strains." *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 2015: 1-20.

¹⁷ David C Rapoport, "Four Waves of Modern Terrorism." In *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy*, by Audrey Kurth Cronin & James Ludes, 46-73. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2004.

has “deeper historical roots” than suggested by him¹⁸. Due to these anomalies they proposed an alternative framework for analysis, based on the premise that

*“...terrorism comes in four different strains and that there is an important element of ‘contagion’ both within and between these separate strains. We believe that it may even be possible to identify a ‘patient zero’ for each strain: an individual who either through advocacy or example first promoted the innovative adoption of terrorist methods to advance a particular political cause. The concept of four strains fits the historical record better, and more plausibly explains how terrorism spreads and evolves from one conflict to the next.”*¹⁹

Parker & Sitter, using the same period as that of Wave theory, proposed four Strains which are 1) Nationalism, 2) Socialism, 3) Religious Extremism and 4) Social Exclusion. They used the definition of terrorism proposed by Boaz Ganor which defines terrorism as “the intentional use of or threat to use violence against civilians or against civilian targets, in order to attain political aims”²⁰.

The basic framework of Parker & Sitter lies in this context. They have provided organizational context of terrorist organizations who “interact regularly with direct competitors learn from both their own and their rivals’

¹⁸ Op Cit. Parker and Sitter 2015: 1-20.

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid

success”²¹. By delineating their conceptual framework, they further provided that the pivotal to the idea of contagion or organizational learning is the spread of ideas and practices through borders, where terrorist groups cooperate with each other or imitate actions of one another. This copying of tactics is what shapes the terrorist organizations in global scenario. Often terrorist organizations are inspired from acts, tactics or operational capabilities of another terrorist organization and hence by employing the tactics provided a bridge of semblance.

They acknowledged Rappaport’s assertion that the spread of terrorist activities was due to technological advancements in both weaponry as well as the mode of communication. Newer and refined weapons proved to be a significant force multiplier for both the state and those fighting it to achieve political aim. In the same way, the technological advances in telecommunication and transportation also provided the added benefits to terrorists who now could easily travel, get funds and become an existential threat. But the most important factor in this progression of terror activities was the spread of political ideas. In their views

*“The nineteenth century brought together the means, the motive, and the opportunity for small bands of committed radicals to take the fight to the established order and men and women of all political stripes were quick to realize the game-changing tools that the march of science had placed in the hands of their followers.”*²²

²¹ Ibid

²² Tom Parker, and Nick Sitter. "The Four Horsemen of Terrorism: Its not waves, its Strains." *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 2015: 1-20.

These radicals, revolutionaries and political leaders are what they have called “patient zero” of the viral contagion, those who have been able to learn, decipher and modify their acts, methods and techniques to achieve their political goals through terror. For Nationalist terrorism, they have chosen Felice Orsini, the Italian Nationalist and staunch supporter of Italian Unification. This fervor of Nationalism was most seen in Irish Nationalists who launched their terror tactics into British mainland as early as 1880s. The tactics used by Irish Nationalists were copied and modified to their advantage by the Jewish (read Zionist) terror groups such as Lehi and Irgun. The very last of the organizations that had been involved in “Nationalistic Terrorism” were Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Although many of those organizations have not achieved their stated goals, but have been crucial part of their narratives.

The poster boy for Socialist Terrorism, in view of Parker and Sitter, is Karl Heinzen, the German contemporary of Marx and Engels. His ideas were thought to be the precursors of the Narodnaya Rasprava (The People’s Retribution) which later evolved into the Narodnaya Volya (The People’s Will). The socialist ideology was transported across the borders and it was used to advantage by Mao Tse Tung against Chinese Nationalist Army and Japanese Imperial Army to success. The concept of armed propaganda or irregular guerrilla warfare were introduced in what Rapoport calls the New Left Wave and Park & Sitter claim to be the product of Socialist Terrorism strain.

Joh Brown, an anti-slavery American abolitionist, has been termed as the patient zero of the Religious Strain of Terrorism. The motivation behind

Brown was his deeply rooted Christian faith. The Irish Nationalism had a strain of religious fervor but it cannot be termed as part of the Religious Strain of Terrorism. The dormancy of Religious Strain was ended with the emergence of Muslim Brotherhood. The tenants of the group's philosophy were "militancy (within context of jihad) and martyrdom"²³. The teaching of two of the influential ideologues of the Muslim Brotherhood, namely Hasan Al-Banna and Sayed Qutub, and later their deaths, established a sense of inspiration to the terror organizations. Parker and Sitter argue that the Religious wave of Terrorism started not in 1979 (the year when Iranian Revolution, Soviet Occupation of Afghanistan and Mecca Siege happened) but it dates way back. Furthermore, religious wave is also applicable to the Christians and Jews, not restricted to the Islamic terror organizations only²⁴.

The last strain on the Strain Theory of Terrorism is the Social Exclusion, the so-called outliers by Rapoport. The patient zero for this is American Confederate General Nathan Forrest and his band of White Christian Supremacists- the Ku Klu Klan. Such outliers were found in Russia (Black Hundreds- the anti-Semitic organization), Germany (Nazi's Sturmabteilung). In post-World War-II era, the incidence of individuals taking the route of terror in Europe and America has shown that most of them are isolated incidents and are due to any number of reasons.

In concluding remarks Parker and Sitter had in support of their theory claimed that

"The four strains differ fundamentally in ideology... Judging by what the terrorists themselves claim, contagion (or

²³ Ibid: 1-20.

²⁴ Ibid: 1-20.

learning) seems to have been somewhat stronger within each strain, than across strains. But it must also be acknowledged that in many cases ideas jumped across both generations and ideologies’’²⁵.

Terrorism in Pakistan: Strain of Waves

The existing current of terrorism can be traced back to the 1970s and 1980s. The abolition of monarchy by Sardar Daud Khan in year 1973 and subsequent Inqilab-e-Saur which led to Soviet Invasion in 1979 and Islamic Revolution in Iran where the monarchy was replaced with theocracy (*Walayat-e-Faqih*) were the events that are considered the principal events in the international arena whose repercussions were more felt in Pakistan. These events, viewed in conjunction with the domestic political scene in Pakistan, provide a fair picture of the political upheaval and birth of violent extremes of political violence by non-state actors²⁶. Plotting the terror related activities in Pakistan since 1980s provide a very complex picture. Such a study has been taken by Saeed, Syed and Martin, who have analyzed data provided in South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP) and Global Terrorism Database (GTD) for the period 1981-2010 and the inferred that

“Historically, non-sectarian violence has been more deadly than sectarian, yet in recent years this pattern has reversed and sectarian violence has become more deadly. Terrorists have responded to crackdowns by adopting tactics with a higher probability of mass casualties, for example, suicide

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Luqman Saeed, Syed Shabib Haider, and Roger P. Martin. "Historical patterns of terrorism in Pakistan." *Defense & Security Analysis* 30, no. 3 (2014): 209-229.

bombing. We have seen the number of events decline, but the number of casualties increase dramatically.

The lethality of terrorism also depends upon the type of violence. Ethnic terrorists, for example, who have a constituency among the people, have pursued a practice of targeted killings either by assassination or targeted bombings. Non-sectarian, non-ethnic terrorists, on the other hand, have no particular constituency among the people, and have employed methods designed to achieve indiscriminate mass casualties such as suicide bombings in public centers. Their objective has been to discredit the government and inculcate fear among the masses for political ends”²⁷.

This study provides a baseline for statistically plotting map of pattern of terrorism and the methods employed by terrorist organizations. The current article has used the data keeping in view the relevance to the explanation of the Waves vs Strains model in historical as well as statistical context. By analyzing data sources they have argued that the terrorism in Pakistan has been in peaks; first peak happened during the period of 1985-1988 at the culmination of Afghan Jihad during its deadliest phase, the second peak (1995–1996) was limited to Sindh, Karachi and rural Sindh, due to military operation conducted at that time. The terrorist activities peaked to the deadliest in history of Pakistan after the launch of military operation in the Tribal areas in year 2004 after the commencement of Global War on Terror

²⁷ Ibid: 209-229.

(GWOT). Another peak of terrorism was observed at the time of Red Mosque Operation in 2007, another military operation. The most preferred mode of operation of the terrorists in the last peak was suicide bombings, which was not only cost effective but also it created mass casualties, undermining the efforts to curb terrorism. The study of Saeed, Syed and Martin later defined the trends of terrorism into three distinct eras: Afghan Jihad (1981-1989), Ethnic and Sectarian Terrorism (1990-1999) and Terror after “War on Terror” (2000-2010).²⁸

Eamon Murphy considers the start of terrorism not with Afghan Jihad but rather he opined that the terror related activities have been “committed by extremist members of the majority Sunni sect of Islam against other Muslim sects and other religions in Pakistan”. In essence the terrorism in Pakistan, in historical context, has primarily been propelled by religious narrative rather than nationalist or anarchist ideas. Let us see how much the terror activities have emerged whether in forms of generational waves as predicted by Rapoport or it has been Strains as proposed by Parker and Sitter.

Pakistan came into existence at the time of end of Anti-Colonial Wave at the time of the emergence of New Left Wave. The country had gone through the New Left Wave where the ethno-political violence later gave birth to Bangladesh.

The actual New Left Wave was observed in East Pakistan which after gaining independence from Pakistan became Bangladesh. The tactics and the methods used by the Bengalis were not different than those used by the proponents of New Left Wave. The guerrilla tactics and destruction of the

²⁸ Ibid

public property became their weapon of choice. The Bengali nationalism surpassed any efforts of assimilation into Pakistani nationality. At the same time the Razakars (volunteers or irregulars) of politico-religious parties in both parts of Pakistan were blamed²⁹.

Of all the Waves of Four Waves, Pakistan fits perfectly into the Religious Wave as the event which started the Religious Wave not only happened right across the border but Pakistan was allegedly accused of instigating and collaborating in destabilizing Afghanistan. The Bhutto government was accused of forming “*Mujahedeen*” as his security policy,

*“...recruited and trained a group of Afghans... Among these young men were Massoud, Gulbadeen Hekmatyar and other members of Jawan-e- Musulman. Massoud’s mission to Bhutto was to create unrest in northern Afghanistan.”*³⁰

The fall out of the Afghan ““*Mujahedeen*”” and Iranian Revolution gave Pakistan the taste of Sectarian Wars which was due to Saudi-Iran proxy war in Pakistan³¹. It is a well acknowledged fact that internal conflict of Afghanistan would always translate into conflict in Pakistan but more importantly terrorism in Pakistan like its makeup is complex, religiously mixed and ethnically fragmented. Therefore, the culmination of religious wave in Pakistan is far from over and may continue to exist beyond the proposed timeline of Rapoport.

²⁹ Sarmila Bose, *Dead Reckoning: Memories of the 1971 Bangladesh War*. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011.

³⁰ Gary W Bowersox, *The Gem Hunter: The Adventure of an American in Afghanistan*. Geo Vision, Inc., 2004.

³¹ Khaled Ahmad, *Sectarian Wars: Pakistan's Sunni-Shiite Violence and its links to Middle East*. Karachi: Oxford Univeristy Press, 2011.

By looking into the viewing glass of Strain Theory of Terrorism, Pakistan has gone through Religious Extremist Strain and has now proceeded to Social Exclusion Strain. This fact can be calibrated as the very first incidence was motivated by the religious sentiments and the victims in that era were the minorities. In Munir Report it was clearly mentioned that the religious parties exploited religion for their own political ends and for them using the banner of Islam a weapon was permissible which they could drop and pick up at pleasure to discomfit a particular adversary³². The 1980s was the period where the number of terrorist attack increased many folds and though they subsided after Afghan War, the sectarian and ethnic incidents rose to peaks. The post-9/11 incidents of high number of casualties and employment of new methods of causing mass destruction resulted in calling Pakistan the most dangerous country in the world. The increasing and indiscriminate rate of bombings especially suicide missions in public places were reminiscent of the tactics used in 1980s with a slight difference; when Pakistan military regime opted to support the “*Mujahedeen*” groups. These elements later wanted to discredit and dissuade Pakistan from actively engaging the efforts against them³³. The splinter cells of various terrorist organizations and lone wolves kept targeting the state while deeming the state and its citizens as apostates. This supports the argument that Pakistan has been fallen into not only religious extremism wave but also Social Exclusion Terrorism has taken its root.

³² The Court of Inquiry, *Report of the Court of Inquiry constituted under Punjab Act 11 of 1954 to enquire into the Punjab disturbances of 1953* (Lahore: Government Print, 1954).

³³ Luqman Saeed, Syed Shabib Haider and Roger P. Martin. "Historical patterns of terrorism in Pakistan." *Defense & Security Analysis* 30, no. 3 (2014): 209-229.

Conclusion

Pakistan was founded with a notion to become homeland of Muslims, a Muslim state where Muslim nationalism was supposed to be further nurtured³⁴. Pakistan's terror related history is riddled with politico-religious portraits, where even the most secular of the leaders were bound to act Muslims. Pakistan's reputation in the international community has been riddled with the fact that it supported the armed band of holy warriors which turned their ideologies and brought the same fight to its door-steps decades later. In backdrop of this, Pakistan's struggle with the menace of terrorism is worth studying. Both the theories, when studied in isolation, provide an evidence of existence of a predominantly longstanding Wave or Strain of Terror. But when studied in context of religio-political, geo-political, strategic, historical and global scenarios, Religious Wave and Religious Strain converged in Pakistan in 1980s during and post-Afghan War. However, with emergence of new players in the field of terror related activities after 9/11 and commencement of the Global War on Terror, the Religious Strain has now converged into Social Exclusion where the splinter groups emerge and lone wolf attacks are performed.

Much like its chequered history, terrorism in Pakistan has happened in patchworks. Both theories do provide a basic framework for the existence of terror network and the common goals achieved by the terrorists and the study of both these in context of a single country would be a vain exercise. However, it may be noted that Pakistan is a country with variety of terror occurrences with divergent groups operating within and outside its borders.

³⁴ For details please see Faisal Devji, Faisal. *Muslim Zion*. Harvard University Press, 2013

There are ethnically active violent elements who want secession; there are religiously motivated organizations who want imposition of *sharia* (Islamic law); and there are religiously extremist groups who want Pakistan to be the center of Global “*Jihadi*” efforts. To recapitulate, the mass-produced terrorist ideologies have created a widespread lethal terrorism in the form of Religious Wave and Religious Strain of Terrorism.

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National Narrative to Counter Terrorism in Pakistan: A Critique

Dr. Munir Masood Marath

Abstract

Militancy emerged as a threat that challenged the state and society in Pakistan. As a consequence, the state was obliged to develop a comprehensive response framework to deal with this challenge. This response framework informs the national narrative of the state vis-à-vis the challenge of militancy. In this contextual framework, this article maps the contours of militancy and the essential features of national narrative developed against it. It further examines the adequacy of the state response vis-à-vis the challenge and attempts to identify the policy gaps that need to be addressed to enhance the impact value of the state interventions in the area of counter-militancy.

Keywords: Jihad, Ideology, *Takfir*, *Khuruj*, Militancy, *Extremism*, Narratives

Introduction

The enormity of the challenge of militancy in Pakistan warrants a comprehensive action plan coupled with concerted efforts on the part of the state apparatus in the areas of counter-terrorism and counter-extremism. However, espousal of an effective response framework requires a deep comprehension of character of militancy. The major significance of this study arises from its scope largely focusing upon ascertaining the actual nature of the threat. It further identifies gaps in state policy to deal with the challenge of militancy. It further aims to suggest the ways and means to

make the response of the state vis-à-vis militancy more robust, comprehensive and effective.

The findings of this research study have been drawn through a blend of quantitative and qualitative research methods. At the outset, the study will ascertain the defining features of militancy in Pakistan followed by an analysis of state response vis-à-vis this challenge. The discussion subsequently seeks to identify the policy gaps in the response framework and further offers recommendations to make the state response more result-oriented.

Revisions in Jihadi Ideology: A Background Study

The Jihadi fraternity that developed during the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan continued to exist even in post-Afghan war scenario but indeed with certain radical revisions in ideological discourse. Where other factors that fostered the ideological bond remained constant, the change in ideological leadership happened to be a variable so strong to trigger conspicuous change in ideological strands of the militants. During the Afghan war, the factors that contributed to the formation of ideological fraternity include foreign aggression of a Muslim soil, pro-Soviet regime in place in Afghanistan and a relatively weaker resistance force vis-à-vis the foreign enemy. In the context of US attacks in Afghanistan, despite the change of enemy, these factors remained constant but the dynamics of resistance underwent radical revisions.

The change in ideological discourse owes to change in ideological leadership of the jihadis. Abdullah Azzam was the chief ideologue of those waging jihad against the Soviets in Afghanistan. He was a Palestinian by origin and a qualified religious cleric belonging to traditional Sunnite

standpoint. He established *Markaz al-Khidmat* (Services Centre) in Peshawar to serve a conduit to channelize the jihadis especially from the Arab world to the war theatre in Afghanistan. As said earlier, as he followed the classical Sunnite views of jihad, the resistance movement remained focused upon foreign enemy and never directed inside the Muslim societies. It was simply because the Sunnite worldview of religion does not ordinarily permit *khurūj* against the Muslim rulers even if they are invalid and deficient in qualifications ideally required for the caliph of the Islamic state.¹ However, in the post- Afghan war scenario, after Azzam, the ideological leadership shifted to the militants like al-Zawahiri of Egyptian tradition. Egyptian line of militants had been part of ideological stream flowing from the intellectual spirits of Sayyid Qutb and al-Faraj who believed in the *takfir* of those Muslim rulers who follow the western agenda against the fellow Muslims. In backdrop of this ideological shift, violence turned inside the Muslim lands on the pretext of jihad against the ‘nearer enemy’. Moreover, the polemics that have been featuring the Indian society got conspicuous in the wake of 1979 Iranian revolution added complexity to the militant landscape in the country.

Ideological Constructs of Militancy

The ideological constructs of militancy in Pakistan need to be uncovered as these contents serve as catalysts to create space wherefrom the militants claim to earn legitimacy to their violent acts. The space thus, created lead to emergence of a fluid local support-base to legitimize the violent acts of the militants which reflects in multiple ways including recruitment of the foot-

¹ Shaiḥ Muslim, *Kitāb al-Ammārah-wajūb Mulāzimah Jamāat al Muslimeen* -1848; Shaiḥ Bukhari, *Kitāb al Fitan: 2, ahkam:4*; Sahih Muslim: *Imarah: 53-6, 58* ;Sahih Muslim-Kitāb al Ammārah: *Khiyar al-ummah wa Sharar hum* (1855)

soldiers, facilitators and exploiting the informal channels of terror financing.

Character of Militancy

Ideological fraternity developed in during the Afghan War redefined into transnational militant brotherhood, though with certain ideological revisions. These revisions are amply expressed through violence directed inward the Muslim societies in general and Pakistan in particular. However, transformation of militancy from local to transnational phenomenon needs to be explained from two primary paradigms namely apprehensions in the Sunnite world regarding the export of Shiite ideology beyond Iran in the backdrop of Iranian revolution and anti-western notion in the Muslim world especially when the US emerged as sole superpower from the cold war quagmire.

Violence against the 'Nearer Enemy'

So far as, violence against the rulers in Muslim states is concerned, theology developed in the domain of traditional Sunnite framework provides a very narrow space for *khurūj* against the Muslim rulers even if they do not come up to the ideal qualification prescribed for the rulers. This Sunnite perspective was upheld by Abdullah Azzam as ideologue of jihadis in Afghanistan against the Soviet. However, as said earlier, this perspective resigned from relevance with the shifting ideological steering to militants influenced by the Egyptian jihadi traditions largely influenced by Sayyed Qutb.² The world view of jihad was not being informed by al-Zawahiri who belonged to 'Islamic Jihad' a splinter group of Muslim Brotherhood.

² For the concept of *takfīr wal hijra*, see, Sayyed Qutb. *Muālim fil tariq* (Milestones) (New York: Globosz Publishing), <http://www.globusz.com/ebooks/Milestone/index.htm> (accessed 30 October 2008).

In practical terms, the direction of jihad which was hitherto focused against the ‘distant enemy’ now refocused against the ‘nearer enemy’. The ‘nearer enemy’ doctrine as espoused by Al-Zawahiri regards the west especially the US as ‘distant enemy’ whereas the rulers in the Muslim societies who follow the agenda of the west against the fellow Muslims happen to be the ‘nearer enemies’ and thus, warrant to be fought against in the first instance. This doctrine opened a window for the violence to creep into the Muslim societies unhindered. The militant narrative developed on the trajectories of this doctrine extended the definitional orbit of ‘nearer enemy’ not only to the ruling elite but also to the security apparatus that safeguards them, physical infra-structure of the state and constitutional framework that provides space to these rulers and media for supporting them.

In pursuance of this doctrine, the militants unleashed violence against the rulers and their support-base in Pakistan. They targeted top-brass civil and military leadership and Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) in the country. During the period 2003-2016, the LEAs had to suffer huge loss. Likewise, a large number of civilians lost their lives too either in terms of collateral damage resulting from violence or targeted for supporting the state, or for not subscribing to militant narrative.³ In the given period, 149 tribal elders were killed in 102 incidents of terrorism largely in Baluchistan and erstwhile FATA. These tribal elders mobilized their tribal fraternity to protect their cultural values and traditions against the challenge of militancy. They were targeted for supporting the coercive organs of the state vis-à-vis militancy. Apart from this, political leadership found in support of the government was also targeted.

³ South Asian Terrorism Portal

Moreover, the militants condemn the constitution of Pakistan for being an instrument of unbelief for affirming the western democratic ideals.⁴ This aspect of militant landscape explains the rationale behind targeting of the political leadership on two grounds: one, political leadership involved in the government functions is liable to be fought against for sharing the responsibility of following western agenda against the fellow Muslims and two, those who participate in democratic process are also liable to be subjected to violence because they have adopted democracy in terms of a religion instead of Islam. During the election campaign prior to 2013 General Elections, from January to May 2013, 148 attacks were launched by the militants that resulted in the killings of 170 persons. Out of these 148 attacks, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan and its affiliates carried out 108 attacks. These attacks were launched against those taking part in electoral process and even the religio-political parties were also not spared in this violence.⁵

Sectarian Character of Militancy

As said elsewhere, being apprehensive of the export of Shiite ideology to the Sunnite societies in the backdrop of 1979 Iranian Revolution, the emergence of Tehrik Nifaz Fiqah-e-Jaafria (TNFJ) was taken in terms of practical manifestation of the Iranian policy of Shiitization of the Sunnite societies. In response, creation Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) needs to be viewed in terms of a counter-balancing tool. These sectarian overtures paved the way of unwarranted and loose application of *takfir* on sectarian grounds. The statistics suggests an upward trend in sectarian violence in the wake of the US attack on Afghanistan. The number of incidents rose from

⁴ Al-Zawahiri's monologue titled *Al-Subh wa' Al-Qindil*.

⁵ Elections 2013: Violence against Political Parties, Candidates and Voters: A Report by Pak Institute for Peace Studies, Islamabad, Pakistan, May, 2013

109 in year 2000 to 341 in 2007 with increase in killings from 149 to 341 in the corresponding time-frame. The number of incidents and the resulting casualties continued to rise till 2013.⁶ The rise in sectarian violence alludes to enhancement of capacity of the sectarian militants especially Lashkar-e-Jhangwi (LeJ) after the militants shifted to erstwhile tribal areas of Pakistan in the wake of the US attacks in Afghanistan after 9/11. This increase in capacity of sectarian outfits could happen owing to fusion of militant outfits which shared common ideology. The space that permitted this militant fusion was easily exploited by LeJ owing to their previous ties with these militant outfits. Likewise, an upward trend is conspicuously visible in the number of Shiite casualties since the year 2000. For instance, the number of incidents rose from 4 in the year 2002 to 81 incidents in 2013. Similarly, in these incidents, number of casualties rose from 06 to 501 during the corresponding period. However, these incidents got declining trend after 2013 which was largely due to the fact that militant outfits got incapacitated in the backdrop of kinetic military measures.⁷

Nevertheless, the proclamation of *takfir* and ensuing violence did not remain limited to these two sects- the Sunnites and the Shiites as it dragged the Hanfite Barelvi sect into the orbit of violence. The Barelvi sect, too, had to face proclamation of *takfir* on the pretext of committing *bida'ā* not only from Salafi Wahabi sect but also from Hanfite *Deobandis*. The militants, on the pretext of purging the society from the unfounded innovations in the domain of faith have been targeting the shrines of the sufi saints which have

⁶ South Asian Terrorism Portal. The figure of casualties not only includes those targeted on sectarian grounds but also those who were killed in terms of collateral damage in the incidents of sectarian violence.

⁷ South Asian Terrorism Portal

been converted into the centers of *bida'ā* by the Barelvis who claim to follow a mystical approach to religion. During the period 2005-2016, 17 attacks were made on the sufi shrines across the country resulting in 263 casualties.⁸

Violence against Minorities

With militants we find a radical shift from the authentic Islamic traditions of religious tolerance vis-à-vis religious minorities since the days of the Prophet (PBUH). The militant narrative which warrants violence against the minorities is basically focused upon achieving the following objectives: One, through invoking the doctrine of vicarious responsibility, the militants aim to target the minorities to avenge the killings of fellow militants. They identify the Pakistani Christians with the western Christians for being their co-religionists instead of identifying them with the Pakistanis in nationalistic terms. Two, the militants' violence against the religious minorities is actually aimed at frustrating the government's resolve to combat terrorism. In the first decade of 21st century, review of attacks against the Christian community shows that 147 persons were killed and 310 persons got injured. In addition, attacks against Ahmedia community claimed 103 lives.⁹

Violence against Media and Education Institutes

For militants, not subscribing to the militants' narrative is an offence serious enough to proclaim *takfir* against the print and electronic media. Data suggests that during the period 2002-2016, in 59 incidents of terrorism, 49 media persons were killed. Out of 59 incidents, in 09 incidents, 10 media

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

persons were killed in terms of collateral damage as they were not directly targeted in these incidents.

In the area of education, the militants do not approve co-education and also the secular character of education. During the period 2004-13 shows that Pakistan has been on top of the 10 countries across the world in terms of number of attacks conducted against the educational institutes. In this period 724 attacks were conducted against the educational institutes which constitutes almost 10% of total number of attacks conducted against different targets across the country in the given time-frame. However, Pakistan was 4th out of top 10 countries in terms of casualties in these incidents of terrorism. Out of 724 attacks, 179 persons were killed in violence against the educational institutes.¹⁰

In precise terms, the nature of targets of the militants' violence suggests that the character of militancy in Pakistan has been essentially ideological. As the preceding discussion highlights, the codes of war adopted by the militants exposes their narrative of violence.

Framework of State Policy

In the preceding discussion, it has been argued that character of militancy in Pakistan has been essentially ideological. The following discussion while examining the existing policy framework to deal with this challenge will culminate into identifying the gaps in the policy framework. It is argued that the existing framework of state policy is largely based upon state interventions in terms of legal, executive and military measures.

¹⁰ START's Global Terrorism Database, <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/> (accessed May 12, 2017)

Legal Measures

a. Anti-terrorism Act 1997

The upsurge in the incidents of terrorism in the country during 1990s exposed the weak capacity of the existing laws and the state was obliged to develop a legal framework to strengthen its coercive organs vis-à-vis the challenge of terrorism. The law has been dynamic enough to respond to ever changing character of militancy through accommodating time to time amendments. It covers within its ambit broad areas of anti-terrorism regime including action against facilitators of terrorism, terror financing and above all, money laundering in terms of a resource to terror activities. It also covers proscribed terrorist organizations and further provides action plan relating to property linked with terrorism. Section 21 of this act is related to the protection of witnesses, judges and prosecutors associated with cases of terrorism. It also authorizes the provincial and federal governments to transfer the case from one court to another and even out of province on the grounds of security. In precise terms, besides other features as mentioned above, this act has three important features: One, it provides fast track for prosecution of cases; two, it attaches non-compoundable character to the offences tried under its scope and three, it provides a wider scope of admissibility of evidence as compared to ordinary laws.

Nevertheless, these features are commonly misused by the investigating agencies in the sense that ordinary cases too are placed within its ambit only to avail its fast track and wider scope of admissibility of evidence and at times, to associate non-compoundable character to the offences. This trend has made the special courts overburdened leading to negative effect on the timely finalization of actual cases of terrorism. However, recently in the last

quarter of 2019, the Supreme Court has redefined ‘terrorism’ to clarify the scope of this act. Notwithstanding certain procedural shortcomings, this act provides a comprehensive legal framework to deal with the menace of terrorism.

b. Regulation Action in Aid of Civil Powers 2011

Besides this, in 2011, Regulation Action in Aid of Civil Powers 2011 was introduced in tribal areas. This legal instrument extended the scope for the armed forces to conduct military operations against the militants. The armed forces were authorized to intern a suspect of terrorism in the aid of civil power.¹¹ It further provides for severe punishments even the capital punishment.¹² It also provides for legal action under CrPC and Anti-terrorism Act 1997.

c. Investigation for Fair Trial Act 2013

In order to fight out terrorism in an effective, Investigation for Fair Trial Act 2013 was introduced which provides for regulatory framework for technology-based surveillance which is admissible in the court proceedings. It lays down the procedure to collect evidence through electronic means. Notwithstanding the human rights implications of this act, it extends legal authority to investigative and surveillance agencies to ensure meaningful and result-oriented surveillance.

¹¹ Dr. Sultan-i-Rome, “The Actions (in Aid of Civil Power) Regulation, 2011: A Critical Analysis”, December 30, 2013, <https://www.sdpi.org/sdc/presentation-sdc/Sultan-i-Rome-Actions%20in%20Aid%20of%20Civil%20Powers-2Jan2014.pdf> (accessed 17 January 2020)

¹² See the text of this legal instrument, Institute for Social Justice, The Actions (in Aid of Civil Power) Regulation, 2011, <http://www.isj.org.pk/the-actions-in-aid-of-civil-power-regulation-2011/> (accessed 17 January 2020)

d. Punjab Protection of Vulnerable Persons Rules 2015

In 2015, the Government of Punjab framed rules regarding the protection of witnesses under section 21 of ATA 1997. Besides this, Prevention of Electronic Crime Act 2016 was introduced which provided for framework for investigation and prosecution of cybercrime in Pakistan. This act has a broad scope to deal with offences relating to cyber space.

e. Special Trial Courts (STCs)

Despite all the afore-mentioned efforts to improve the impact- value of the legal structure, there was an understanding that extra-ordinary situation demands extra-ordinary measures. With this realization, STCs were established through amendments in the constitution and Pakistan Army Act in 2015. Though, the idea of these courts earned criticism on the part of human rights organization yet their creation was viewed in the context of being a way forward in the face of weaknesses of the existing anti-terrorism legal structure. Moreover, sunset clause was included regarding the tenure of these courts. This clause affirmed that these courts were created in terms of an interim measure in view of the serious capacity limitations of the existing anti-terrorism regime. During the period of their operations, total 717 cases were referred to the STCs out of which 650 cases were finalized by these courts. Out of these 650 cases, death sentence was awarded to 344 individuals. However, 56 convicted terrorists were executed.

Executive Measures

In face of the challenge of militancy, the state's resolve is expressed through three major executive initiatives which include developing of National Internal Security Policy (NISP) 2014, creation of National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) and the most important of all, National

Action Plan (NAP).

a. National Internal Security Policy (NISP) 2014

NISP (2014) reflects the aspirations of the stakeholders on the issue of national security vis-à-vis the challenge of militancy through kinetic and non-kinetic interventions. In broader terms, the hard interventions focus largely upon capacity building of LEAs and stringent measures under the existing legal framework whereas soft interventions include dialogue with stakeholders, evolving of national narrative and plugging in of sources that generate an atmosphere which in turn, creates a space for the subscription of militancy in society. There developed an understanding that these drivers of militancy and extremism in society could only be blocked through socio-economic development in the benefit of marginalized sections of society. These non-kinetic measures further include structural reforms in the framework of religious seminaries and an arrangement providing for enhanced coordination amongst state agencies to deal with terror financing. So far as the actions plans to implement these interventions are concerned, it provides for Composite Deterrence Plan (CDP) to deal with kinetic interventions whereas Comprehensive Response Plan (CRP) would reinforce the non-kinetic interventions. A comparative impact-analysis of these two-pronged interventions highlights that on ground, the kinetic side has been overshadowing the softer side of the state policy. In 2018, as a follow-up of a new version of NISP (2018) was launched. It was built on achievements and gaps in achievement of policy objectives of the previous policy.

b. National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA)

As said earlier, enhanced coordination amongst state agencies and other

stakeholders was the key feature of national security vision of the state. In order to regulate this coordination NACTA was created through National Counter Terrorism Authority Act 2013. In addition to regulating coordination amongst state agencies and stakeholders, the authority has served as a national body to overview the anti-terrorism efforts in the country. For practical purposes, the authority has been instrumental in maintaining consolidated list of those placed at 4th Schedule of Anti-terrorism Act 1997 to facilitate the connected agencies to take action as warranted by law. The authority has also been instrumental in creating Financial Management Unit (FMU) to trace the terror leads in financial transactions in the country. Further, being in coordination with intelligence agencies in the country, NACTA develops intelligence review of security landscape on periodical basis. It also monitors and evaluates the implementation of National Action Plan (NAP) across the country and conducts policy review of the implementation of National Action Plan.

c. National Action Plan (NAP)

The terrorist attack on Army Public School (APS) Peshawar on 16th December 2014 happened to be watershed and its emotional side was strong enough to redefine Pakistan anti-terrorism course of action by bring all stakeholders at a point of consensus regarding the action plan. The result of this consensus was National Action Plan which provided a new direction to the state interventions in the domain of anti-terrorism through national consensus. NAP consists of 20 action points which for the sake of discussion can be bifurcated into three broad categories of actions:

One, as said elsewhere in this study, Interim action points under NAP are those which were taken in terms of immediate and stop-gap arrangements

to achieve the results vis-à-vis the mounting challenge of militancy and terrorism. These include lifting of moratorium on death sentence for those convicted of terrorism and the creation of STCs. In the hindsight, these measures have been able to create the desired deterrent effect upon the terrorist outfits.

Two, kinetic action points are hardcore initiatives in the domain of anti-terrorism. These include removing operational space for proscribed militant organization, action against organized criminal gangs, stringent legal action against hate speech and misuse of loudspeakers, Karachi operation, action to eliminate no-go areas in the country, action against misuse of social media and terror financing.

Three, non-kinetic initiatives are largely focused upon structural reforms to remove the space for subscription of militancy in the society. NAP aims to achieve this objective through improving the service delivery of the state institutions. It preconceives a linkage between social alienation and militancy and thus, aims to uplift the marginalized sections of society. National Action Plan provides for structural reforms in erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), revamping of Madāris, reforms in criminal justice system, capacity building of provincial CTDs and above all, initiatives related to Balochistan package. It also emphasizes upon strengthening of NACTA.

As said earlier, the interim and kinetic initiatives have been overshadowing the non-kinetic side of National Action Plan. The provincial governments made legislations to achieve the objectives of kinetic measures. In Punjab, new laws were introduced in this regard. These laws include Sound System Regulation 2015, Information of Temporary Residents Ordinance 2015 and

Security of Vulnerable Establishments Act 2015. Without going into details regarding the status of structural reforms initiatives, it is argued that impact value of kinetic action points is amply evident from the declining trend in terrorist activities in the country. However, in the context of non-kinetic measures, though structural reforms initiatives have been launched yet these are at rudimentary level in terms of their practical value. A consistent focus upon these initiatives is required to direct these reforms into the benefit of common man.

Military Measures

Military has been in lead role in action against militancy since its inception. A study of 10 most important military operations (2002-todate) reveals that out of these operations, geographical scope of 08 military operations launched against the challenge of militancy and terrorism was limited to some specific areas. However, in 2014, Operation Zarb-e-Azb was launched across the country against the challenge of militancy. This operation had tremendous impact value vis-à-vis the challenge. It virtually eliminated the capacity of terrorist outfits to launch any major terrorist activity in the country. This operation happened to be the most well-coordinated and well-planned operation ever launched on Pakistani soil against the terrorist outfits.¹³ In actuality, it was launched in terms of ‘war of survival’ for Pakistan.¹⁴ A sharp decline in the number of terrorist activities confirm the

¹³ Mariam Shah, “Comparing Pakistan’s Past Military Operations with Operation Zarb-e-Azb”, *Pakistan Defence*, August 12, 2014, <https://defence.pk/pdf/threads/comparing-pakistans-past-military-operations-with-operation-zarb-e-azb-pkkh-tv.328771/> (accessed 17 January 2020)

¹⁴ Asim Bajwa, “Zarb-e-Azb is War of Survival”, *Radio Pakistan*, (June 27, 2014), <http://www.radio.gov.pk/27-Jun-2014/zarb-e-azb-is-war-of-survival-bajwa> (accessed June 18, 2017)

impact value of this operation. Nevertheless, in order to consolidate the successes against the challenge of terrorism, Operation Radd-ul-Fasad (Rejection of Mischief) was launched in 2017. This operation was claimed to achieve three broad objectives: one, elimination of residual threat of terrorism; two, consolidating the achievements of earlier operations and above all, safeguarding the national borders.¹⁵ This operation was declared as joint endeavor of civilian LEAs and armed forces. Paramilitary forces were deployed in Punjab to conduct effective Intelligence-Based Operations (IBOs) in the province.¹⁶

It is argued that though the military operation proved to be of paramount success via-a-vis the challenge of terrorism yet as natural fall out of these operations, local infrastructure in the tribal areas got seriously damaged and population displaced. It is equally important to rehabilitate this population in the post-operation scenario. Having been directly hit by terrorism and by-default by anti-terrorism measures, this population is already traumatic and if not properly rehabilitated is more prone to extremism. Though the non-kinetic and action points relating to structural reforms as enshrined in NAP is towards right direction yet the government should ensure that timelines set for the implementation of these action points are strictly adhered to.

Space for Militant Ideology

An inquiry into the codes of war adopted by the militants reveal that they attempt to draw legitimacy to their acts of violence through introducing

¹⁵ Muhammad Azeem, "Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad and Concept of Responsible Neighbourhood". *Hilal*, (March 2017), <http://hilal.gov.pk/index.php/layouts/item/2621-operation-radd-ul-fasaad-and-concept-of-responsible-neighbourhood> (accessed 11 June 2017)

¹⁶ "Pakistan Army launches 'Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad' across the country", *Dawn*, February 22, 2017

theological distortions in the interpretation of primary texts of religious import. Against this challenge, the state response is limited to the extent of legal, executive and military initiatives. This framework of state policy has been tremendously successful in terms of incapacitating the physical capacity of the militant outfits largely through kinetic actions. However, the action points relating to structural reforms are yet to improve service delivery ultimately aimed removing the space for subscription of militant ideology in the society.

National Identity Issue

Pakistan's creation in 1947 was result of a long drawn ideological movement. The undercurrents of this ideological movement were provided by the two-nation theory. Despite being in minority, the Muslims in United India projected the two-nation theory to claim separate statehood vis-à-vis Hindus who constituted numerical majority. This ideological identity which emerged from the religion provided a space to Mr. Jinnah to evolve an argument in support of separate statehood for the Muslims. He argued, "It is extremely difficult to appreciate why our Hindu friends fail to understand the real nature of Islam and Hinduism. They are not religions in the strict sense of the word, but are, in fact, different and distinct social orders, and it is a dream that the Hindus and Muslims can ever evolve a common nationality, and this misconception of one Indian nation has troubles and will lead India to destruction if we fail to revise our notions in time. The Hindus and Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs, and litterateurs. They neither intermarry nor inter-dine together and, indeed, they belong to two different civilizations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions. Their aspect on life and of life

are different. It is quite clear that Hindus and Mussalmans derive their inspiration from different sources of history. They have different epics, different heroes, and different episodes. Very often the hero of one is a foe of the other and, likewise, their victories and defeats overlap. To yoke together two such nations under a single state, one as a numerical minority and the other as a majority, must lead to growing discontent and final destruction of any fabric that may be so built for the government of such a state”.¹⁷ Likewise, Dr. Iqbal also demanded separate statehood for the Muslim majority areas. He said, “India is a continent of human groups belonging to different races, speaking different languages, and professing different religions [...] Personally, I would like to see the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sindh and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single State. Self-government within the British Empire, or without the British Empire, the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim State appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims, at least of North-West India”.¹⁸

Nevertheless, Pakistan which emerged from ideological exclusivity in 1947 could not escape from definitional confusion regarding its character. Objectives Resolution 1949 was the first attempt to draw the contours of the state on ideological lines.¹⁹ However, those on the other side of the fence advocated for secular character of the state. This debate regarding the

¹⁷ Pakistan Visions, An International Journal of Pakistan Affair (Quaid-i-Azam Number), II, no.1 & 2 (Lahore: Nazria-e-Pakistan Trust), January-July 2001, <http://nazariapak.info/Quaid-e-Azam/Jinnah-vision.php> (accessed 17 January 2020)

¹⁸ Latif Ahmed Sherwani, *Speeches, Writings, and Statements of Iqbal*, 2nd ed. (Lahore: Iqbal Academy, 1977), 3-26.

¹⁹ Story of Pakistan, <http://storyofpakistan.com/objectives-resolution-is-passed> (accessed June 14, 2019)

character of the newly established state confounded the nation as whole regarding the vision of Mr. Jinnah about the defining features of statehood. Looking from the edge, in context of the challenge of militancy, the narrative offered by the secularists vis-à-vis the militants could not neutralize the challenge of militant ideology it is not subscribed by even those who reject the militant ideology but at the same times, do not own the secularists' perspective as well for not being in consonance with Islamic principles.

Secularization of Clergy

In their bid to secularize the Indian society, the British replaced the Islamic laws, Islamic seminaries and the Persian language with British laws, Christian missionary schools and English language respectively.²⁰ This policy sidelined the ulema (religious clergy) who used to be the custodians of religious seminaries. In the colonial scenario, they were divorced from public sphere and were forced to the confines of religious sphere alone. They would no more provide human resource to the public service. Though the public sphere went beyond the domain of clergy yet they could assume an unimpeachable authority on all the matters religious. Thus, secularization in terms of a process not only emerged in liberal sections of society, the clergy having been excluded from active temporal sphere was compelled to remain within the exclusive ambit of theology. As a natural consequence, secularization process culminated into dissipation of a broad social base and extended unchallengeable authority of interpreting the religious texts in their respective theological frame. With the disappearance of this social

²⁰ Choudhury Mohammad Ali, *The Emergence of Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967),7

base, the theological controversies became the sole domain of ulema. In this context, ulema got an uncontested role of influencing the society through their religious authority. They turned into a group that as Stephen Humphreys puts it ‘makes the society Islamic’.²¹

Even the secular educated class have been left with hardly any choice but to look towards ulema for routine guidance in the matters of faith. In this historical background, it is argued that theological distortions introduced by the militants to evolve their ideology of violence could not get a suitable response from the society as a whole simply because a large section of society had already been separated from the realm of theology. In this area, though the state policy provides for regulatory framework for the clergy to vis-à-vis militancy yet it does not aim at de-secularizing the clergy in practical terms. The current narrative is deficient in terms of breaking the fence between religious and so-called liberal segments of society.

Counter Narrative to Militant Ideology

If ulema have become the sole authority in the matters of faith, they were required to develop a counter narrative to militants’ strands through challenging the authenticity of their ideology of violence. As discussed above, the framework of state policy culminating into a national narrative provides for stringent legal measures to regulate and discipline the conduct of ulema. New laws framed to implement NAP served the purpose of regulating the conduct of ulema well. However, the action plan does not contain any provision that would encourage the ulema to set the ideological distortions introduced by the militants aright. In this context, Paigham-e-

²¹ R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry*, (New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2009), 187

Pakistan (Message of Pakistan) happened to be a step towards right direction. Though, this document has limited scope yet it may serve as stepping stone for evolving of counter-narrative.

Conclusion

To sum up, following broad conclusions may be drawn:

One, the secularization of clergy through colonial design of governance in United India led to waning out of broad social base to discuss theological questions and further created a space for militant ideology. The clergy needs to be de-secularized through a process that acknowledge the role of ulema in both religious and temporal spheres.

Two, the national narrative vis-à-vis militancy which is reflected through legal, executive and military measures is inadequate in terms of dealing with the ideological undercurrents of the challenge. The national narrative must incorporate a counter narrative to strike down theological distortions introduced by the militants. The ulema should be encouraged to play their invaluable role in evolving this counter narrative.

Three, the confusion regarding the national identity help to perpetuate militancy in society. The character of the state has been clearly defined in the constitution whereby it has been declared to be the Islamic Republic. The elements creating confusion regarding the national identity needs to be discouraged by the society as a whole because a strong national narrative cannot come up from the identity confusion.

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Changing Dynamics of Religious Extremism: Rise of Urban Religiously Motivating Violence in Pakistan and India

Dr. Arshi Saleem Hashmi

Abstract

Religiously motivated violence in the form of communal riots in India and sectarian violence in Pakistan has been a dominant factor inciting hate against the minorities. The new dynamics however, now being experienced is the urban youth being mobilized in the name of religion, they are otherwise relatively educated, live in cities, practice religion and professionals. These young “normal” people find motivation following their leaders and indulge in committing acts of violence against the “other”. In India, with the rise of BJP under Modi and the political space RSS *Sanghis* acquired has resulted in violent expression of their commitment to the cause of Hindutva.

Pakistan on the other hand, while dealing militarily with the Taliban (who happen to be *Deobandis*) ignored the fact that more larger population of urban youth following *Braelvi* school of thought has managed to acquire the social and political space. This has resulted in mass mobilization by the leaders of Sunni *Braelvis* in the cities in the name of Prophet (PBUH). These young mobilized city dwellers proved to be extremely intolerant towards other sects and minorities. In both countries, unlike old extremists, the new extremists prefer to participate in democratic politics and yet believe in violently convincing the other.

The paper is significant to understand the changing dynamics of extremists in both countries that is weakening the democratic order of the post-colonial

South Asian states. It is also important as the threat is within and unlike traditional Pakistan-India conflict, it endorses the ideological hardening which makes both the states vulnerable to ideologically driven mass mobilization of young urban extremists, thus making it extremely difficult to establish peace in the region.

Keywords: Religion Extremism, Sectarianism, Hindutva, Secularism, RSS, *Braelvi*, *Deobandi*

Introduction

Pakistan and India are witnessing religiously motivating violence ever since time of partition, even before, during the independence movement, religion was dominant in inciting hate against the other. The new dynamics that is now being experienced is the urban youth being mobilized in the name of religion, they are otherwise relatively educated, live in cities, practicing religion and professionals. These young "normal" people find motivation following their leaders and indulge in committing acts of violence against the "other". In India, with the rise of BJP under Modi and the political space RSS *Sanghis* acquired has resulted in violent expression of their commitment to the cause of *Hindutva*. Pakistan on the other hand, while dealing militarily with the Taliban (who happen to be *Deobandis*) ignored the fact that more larger population of urban youth following *Braelvi* school of thought managed to acquire the social and political space resulting in mass mobilization by the leaders of Sunni *Braelvis* in the cities in the name of Prophet (PBUH). These young mobilized city dwellers proved to be extremely intolerant towards other sects and minorities.

There can be many reasons for such development. In India, the accommodative policy of present BJP government of not taking action against RSS ideologically driven youth expanding their activities based on the idea of a Hindu India and bringing back the post-colonial South Asian states in the fold of “*Akhand Bharat*” (United India). India's definition of violent extremist has been on ideologically driven Kashmiri jihadists and the Maoist in the North East. RSS motivated young *Sanghis* in India target Muslims as well as seculars whom they find responsible for India's failure to become a true Hindu state. In Pakistan, it was the focus of both military and civil government on eliminating Taliban in the country. These factors have helped other local groups to inspire and attract recruitment of educated young people to claim their identity on the basis of their religious beliefs and express violently against other people of different sect and religion. *Braelev Sunni* followers believe that the respect and honor that Prophet (PBUH) deserves is in danger because other sects and minorities have been given space and hence Islam is in danger.

The paper is significant to understand the changing dynamics of extremism in both the countries that is weakening the democratic order of the post-colonial South Asian states. It is also important as the threat is within and unlike traditional India-Pakistan conflict, it endorses the ideological hardening which makes both the states vulnerable to ideologically driven mass mobilization of young urban extremists. Also, unlike the Jihadists, both Indian and Pakistani new radicals are part of the political process, they vote and support candidates in the elections and do not reject the constitutional framework, instead demand more inclusion of religious doctrines in the constitution. This generation of urban extremists uses

various social media platforms for propaganda dissemination, recruitment and operational planning. In addition to robust social media monitoring capabilities and operational preparedness, governments in Pakistan and India would require robust counter-ideological responses to overcome and neutralize their appeal among the young people.

Global Rise of Religious Extremism: Politics Turning to the Right

Global politics in the early 21st century is being defined by two complementary extremisms: Islamist extremism and the far right be it Christian or Hindu extremism. The global resurgence of religion is part of the search for authenticity and development in the Third World as Scott M. Thomas stated, "the global resurgence of religion in developing countries can be seen as part of the 'revolt against the West'."¹ Hedley Bull identified three waves of revolt: "the first, from the 1940s through the 1960s, was the anti-colonial struggle for independence and sovereign equality; the second, from 1970s through the 1980s, was the struggle for racial equality and economic justice; and the third is the struggle for cultural liberation, it is the reassertion of the traditional and indigenous cultures in the Third World."²

Religious communities are reasserting with show of strength for many decades now. Contrary to the notion that religion would cease to exist as a political force, they appear to be more organized and mobilized through social institutions. Human service institutions such as hospitals

¹ Scott M. Thomas, " Taking Religious and Cultural Pluralism Seriously: The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Society", *Millennium*, Vol 29, Issue 3, December 1, 2000, pp. 815 - 841

² Hedley Bull, "The Revolt Against the West, " in Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (ed) *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1984)

schools and charities are run in the name of their respective religious denominations. In Pakistan the induction of Islamic laws as public law and in India Hindu nationalists attempt to establish their creed as the state privileged religion. In the US, the Christian Right tries to capture the state for the dissemination and implementation of the eternal truth as they understand it.³

Secularism used to be the new normal for politics. Thus, the political theories of International Relations were devoid of any discussion on religion because, such religion is supposed to be *outside* politics. In mid 1990s Peter L. Berger declared that a religious resurgence was underway.⁴ The conservative Christian Jimmy Carter in White House, the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the rise of *Mujahideen* against Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the public approval of the Solidarity movement in Poland were some of the major changes. Berger's opinion of religious rise in politics came full circle with the events of September 11, global war on terror transformed the political discourse globally.

The western idea of progress under liberalism is being challenged and communities are redefining political life based on moral and religious values. The potent mix of religion, nationalism and globalization is wreaking havoc on old tradition of politics and development thus challenging the global idea of state craft. Religiosity has become the most important factor in global politics, given the nature of religion taking

³ Andreas Hasenclever and Volker Rittberger, " Does Religion Make a Difference? in Fabio Petito and Pavlos Hatzopoulos (eds) Religion in International Relations: The Return from Exile, New York Palgrave Macmillan 2003 p- 107

⁴ Peter L. Berger, "Secularism in Retreat," *The National Interest* 46 (1996/97): 3–12.

leading role in the politics, it seems that the current time that we live in has certainly become God's century.

Countries like Pakistan and India despite their different constitutional characters, fast embracing religion as a source of legitimacy which is influencing the belief system and behavior of their population. Thus, an era of populism based on religion is unleashed and has become a political strategy for mass mobilization.

Religion or religiosity is certainly not a problem, it only become an issue use of extreme religious views bring new dimensions to conflicts making them more complex. The conflicts within and outside the state have become more personalized because of faith with promises heavenly luxuries providing vehicles of social mobilization that embrace supporters. Through organizational network of religious institutions like mosques and temples, the actions are legitimized getting moral justification for political encounters and violence.

The faith-based struggle changes the perception of the conflict transforming into extreme opposing position. This tendency is evident in South Asia with its emotionally charged young population looking for divine help to solve their everyday problems. An analysis of Pakistan and India rising religious mobilization translating in politics making it emotionally charged, judged on moral grounds and justifying violence is important to review the current trends of local politics affecting the democratic process in post-colonial South Asian states.

India: A Religious Society with Secular Constitution

India preferred to adopt a secularist agenda since inception. The

constitution of India 1949 guarantees freedom of religion as the fundamental right. The word "secular" could not be made part of the constitution till 42nd amendment in 1976. Later with major decisions by successive regimes, secularism became a significant part of constitution of India. The rise of BJP and allies has changed that well protected secular credentials of Indian since 1947. But even before, the uniqueness of Indian secularism was such that, the state was supposed to be neutral regarding religion but was allowed to interfere equally, without preference, in all religions.

Politically, secularism was accepted but the social and political structure continued to be dominated by Hinduism. Post-independence initiatives were more focused on indigenous culture and identity than secularization of institutions. Hindu nationalists benefitted the most in post-Independence India, they managed to transform the political and social discourse in India.⁵ Though existed since 1925, RSS has come to fore as the motivating force committed to Hindu revivalism but it was only in 1998-99 that the political rise of the RSS after an alliance with BJP was witnessed.

Indian Local Politics and Ultra-Orthodox Hindu Extremism

BJP's active role in Indian politics emerged in 1990s though it was established in 1980, it was which reflects the fact that till late 1980s, secular identity of political parties was more popular among the masses in India. It was in 1998 and 1999 that BJP managed to secure majority in the

⁵ Dyahadroy, Swati, " " Gender_culture and seva_a study of Dnyana Prabodhini," Department of Sociology, Savitribai Phule Pune University, Chapter 1 available at http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/185093/9/07_chapter%201.pdf

parliament thus began an era of religiously motivated politics in India. India's image as a democracy with religious pluralism with Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism and Christianity faces a great challenge of ultra right wing Hindu extremism, for instance, the Ayodhya made a dent in India's secular image. The dispute turned into serious communal violence. Ironically, it was Congress party's decision to launch its 1991 election campaign. Later BJP intensified its campaign for Ram temple at the place of Ayodhya mosque. The use of religious sentiments undermined the secular credentials of India.

Hindu extremism came to fore through the political campaigns of RSS and VHP in the 1980s and 1990s that culminated in the Gujarat violence against the Muslims. Religion got a prominent role in politics instead of social and material issues. BJP first ever government in the center brought communal rioting as a tool to political groups. Communal violence in Gujarat in 2002 targeted Muslims, it was a systematic genocide of the Muslim population of the state.

The *Hindutva* ideology works on exploiting sense of victimhood for Hindu identity being attacked by the "outsiders" who have been attacking India and thus forcing the Hindus to become either Muslim or Christian through their rule. This however, remains a flawed argument, even after Muslim and British rule, Hinduism remained the religion of majority of the people.

Pakistan: A Religious Society with Religious Constitution

In contemporary global politics, Pakistan is considered as weak democracy influenced by religious forces having both institutional and out of mainstream political role. The role of religion and political accommodation

has unleashed the forces of religious intolerance and violent extremism that has not only affected its own society but the region and the world at large. Though, as a policy, the state does not approve violent extremism, the political space to various religious groups over the years has empowered the extremist forces. These forces brought the state to a situation where majority political discourse is hijacked by the minority religious fanaticism leading to religious extremism and its violent manifestation in the country as well as in the region.

Two years after the inception of the new state and just one year after the demise of the founder of Pakistan, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the Objectives Resolution was passed in 1949 by the constituent assembly. Though Islamic in nature, Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan reassured the minorities protection of their rights as envisioned by the Quaid-e-Azam. However, the constitution framed several years after Liaquat Ali Khan's assassination, cannot really claimed to be very welcoming to the minorities. "The 1956 Constitution was perhaps the most cognizant of Pakistan's multicultural character and, while paying its due respect to the Islamic culture and civilization, the constitution remained non-committal on a state religion and guaranteed complete equality."⁶

Constitutionally, any law or custom that is inconsistent with the fundamental right is nullified. An independent judiciary enforces that. 1973 Constitution does have a more definite Islamic Character than the previous Constitutions. Nevertheless, 1973 Constitution with its articles on Islam as the state religion and offices of both President and Prime

⁶ Yasir Hamdani, Pakistani Constitution, Islam and Minority, Criterion Quarterly, February 1, 2016

Minister reserved for Muslims, it does not technically call for a theocratic state. Parliament with its representatives of Pakistani citizens is the sole maker of the legislations. Supreme Court interprets the laws and a Council of Islamic Ideology that does exist is only there in advisory role but cannot enforce. This however has never got a place in public discourse. Lawyers and Judges avoid discussion on it. During General Zia's regime several amendments changed the character of the constitution towards orthodoxy. *Hudood Ordinance*⁷ brought in practice a number of laws based on "Sharia" while the civilian and criminal laws remained intact, the duality brought confusion and used according to convenience.

Later Gen. Musharraf's regime managed to bring some changes discarding some of the articles in the *Hudood* ordinance while the attempt to review blasphemy law was criticized and sparked a protest by the religious groups. The current constitutional character is a mix of civil laws and vague references to the Islamic injunctions which are used politically and provide space for religious exploitation. Religious groups never get electoral victory in Pakistan but their political and social mobilization bring pressure to the mainstream political parties who prefer not to take any decision that would anger the religious groups. Pakistan is thus an interesting case where people do not vote religious groups but stand behind them to watch the government of mainstream political parties against any decision that may appear "un Islamic".

Pakistan has witnessed thousands of casualties due to terrorism specially in last two decades. Religiously motivated violence by Tehrik-e-Taliban

⁷ A Critical Report on Hudood Ordinance, 1979, available at Council of Islamic Ideology <http://cii.gov.pk/publications/h.report.pdf>

Pakistan (TTP), Al-Qaeda or sectarian outfits like Lashkar-e-*Jhangvi* (LeJ) and *Ahl-e-Sunnat Wal Jamat* (ASWJ) belonging to *Deobandi* school of thought primarily targeting Shi'ites and Ahmadis. TTP's attacks on markets, schools and hospitals have killed even the innocent civilians from Sunni sect as well. Thanks to the successive military operations against the TTP, there has been a decline in overall incidents of terrorism across the country. Terrorism has surely declined but violent extremism is still rife across Pakistan. The recent display of aggressive and extreme behavior by the relatively quiet *Braelvi Sunni* sect in Pakistan which happens to be followed by the majority of Sunni population in Pakistan is in talk of the town. *Braelvis* in the sub-continent are the followers of the Sufi branch of the Sunni sect with generational linkages with great Sufi preachers who came to the Sub-continent and buried in various shrines across the region and venerated by the local population.

Compared to transnational nature of other groups, this sect has been indigenous and kept mild and low profile in the politics of the country. Though there have been political parties like *Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Pakistan* which claimed to be representing the *Braelvis* but they never rose to the stature of enjoying the political space and patronage that was once given to the *Deobandis* due to the Jihad in Afghanistan against the Soviets. Thus, due to lack of financial and political patronage, the followers remained focused on personal piety and faith, with the only exception in Karachi where *Sunni Tehrik* under Mohammed Saleem Qadri tried to engage violently with the MQM in city's local turf war.

A rapid transformation was observed among the follower of often mistaken "moderate Sufis" after the execution of Mumtaz Qadri, the

bodyguard of Governor of Punjab, Salman Taseer and a staunch supporter of anti-blasphemy law, who killed the governor on the grounds that he supported Asia Bibi accused of blasphemy. Mumtaz Qadri was arrested and after a long trial was sentenced to death by the High Court. An appeal to Supreme Court also resulted in rejection of his stance. *Braelvis* across Pakistan reacted aggressively and vowed to take revenge from the government. A shrine was built in the town where Mumtaz Qadri was buried and both old and young, urbanite residents of Punjab's cities paid homage. While the event was dismissed by the authorities as a temporary reaction, it continued to expand and led to emotional mobilization of once apolitical, non-violent followers of the 'moderate Sufi' sect.

The current political stage has now new religious players along with the *Deobandis*, the *Barelvis* are fast becoming the new face of extremism in Pakistan. Extremist Barelvi groups like the *Sunni Tehreek*, *Sunni Ittehad Council*, *Majlis-e-Tahaffuz-e-Khatm-e-Nabuwat* etc. have lately intensified their witch-hunt of religious minorities and 'liberals' across the country.⁸

Dealing militarily with the terrorists was not easy but the major military operations have successfully eliminated the expanding Pakistani Taliban outfits in the country. However, the bigger challenge is to change the vituperative mindset that fuels extremism, highly emotional young followers of the *Braelvi* sect are threatening the core of the society and Pakistan will have to deal with it with a completely different policy, the rise of *Braelvi* Sunni extremism can be a much bigger challenge as it is not

⁸ Kashif Chaudhry, Pakistan and the Rise of Barelvi Sunni Extremism, Huffington Post, January, 2017

an outside ideology but based on very local motivation that has roots in the land.

The Old versus the New Extremism

Pakistan: Anti Blasphemy Groups

Religious politics has evolved into narrower sectarian (*Braelvi* extremism) from more global Islam (the old jihadists) with the political mobilization of *Braelvi* sect under new banners. However, it would be wrong to say that *Braelvi* extremism is a new phenomenon. In 2001, when Musharaff's regime declared that many religious groups were now be banned because of their extremist ideology and violent behavior, traditional Sufi variant of Sunni *Hanafi* sect, *Braelvi* groups were given space as the face of "moderate Islam". True to an extent that *Braelvis* though in majority had been largely non-violent and submissive compared to politically patronized *Deobandis*, it was the socio-political space that worked in their empowerment while the state was after the Taliban who happened to be *Deobandis*. *Deobandi Madrassas* were under the watch while military operation was being carried out to eliminate terrorism. While this was happening, *Braelvis* holding the banner of anti-blasphemy, continued to expand their influence in nook and corner of the country in last 15 years. The socio-political space helped them organize more and assert at the societal level their aggressive stance. Unlike, the Taliban, *Braelvis* do not have a large agenda vis-à-vis establishing *Sharia* in Pakistan. Their assertiveness is more focused and based on single agenda, that is, preserving and protecting anti-blasphemy law.

The transition from old to new form of extremism took almost two

decades but last ten years have been instrumental. Since, the traditional Islam that is followed by majority of the people involves music and emotional binding through religious songs, without asking for a more stringent rituals of *Deobandi* or *Salafi* commitment. It is attractive for urban young followers who want to ascertain their faith while continue to engage in worldly life.

In post 9/11 world, the discourse developed that the extremist ideology is not the Islam which is followed by the majority of Muslim hence idea of 'moderate Islam' got attention in global press. In Pakistan, Musharraf regime started to institutionalize Sufi Islam in Pakistan to counter the new wave of religious extremism by establishing the 'National Council for Promotion of Sufism.' It was argued that Sufism was based on tolerance and harmony which suited to Pakistan's diversity. The United States also took a great interest and even sponsored the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC)—a *Barelvi* religious party which was primarily established to encourage *Barelvis* to counter the influence of the Taliban and extremist ideologies.⁹

Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan People's Party initiated a policy to promote Sufi values to counter the threat of extremism and terrorism by renaming the Council as Sufi Advisory Council.¹⁰ The narrative got popularized by the *Barelvi* clerics that *Deobandis* were responsible of the violent extremism in the country, *Barelvis* came forward aggressively to promote

⁹ Huma Imtiaz, "US aid to Sunni Ittehad Council backfired," The Express Tribune, January 12, 2012, available at <https://tribune.com.pk/story/320193/one-off-grant-us-aid-to-sunni-ittehad-council-backfired/>

¹⁰ Government to set up Sufi Advisory Council, DAWN, June 7, 2009 available at <https://www.dawn.com/news/958940>

this narrative which widened the gulf of sectarianism in society. Governor Salman Taseer's support for Asia Bibi (a Christian woman accused of blasphemy) triggered unrest in Barelvi sect resulted into the assassination of Salman Taseer. The death sentence awarded to the murderer (Mumtaz Qadi) by the Supreme Court strengthened the waves of Barelvi extremism. The *Barelvi* clerics used this as an opportunity to mobilize the followers and managed considerable strength in public with no specific resistance from the government. In this background, a religio-political organization named *Labaik Ya Rasool Allah* came into being.¹¹ The blatant show of force during the sit-in by the party under Maulana Khadim Hussain Rizvi was a practical manifestation of rising extremism in Barelvi sect.

The anti-blasphemy groups have got stronger since then causing many violent incidents resulted in murder of citizen accused of blasphemy. However, this did not stop here but transformed into a political party pledged to contest elections on single agenda of protecting and preserving the blasphemy law.

The recently held election result has brought TLP as mainstream religio-political party. It contested elections across the country, managed to win a few seats but where it lost, it still managed to garner votes. There are few factors that makes it an interesting yet alarming case.

Unlike other parties, TLP on its one-point agenda of preserving the sanctity of the Prophet (PBUH) attracted voters from diverse background from all across Pakistan. But the most astonishing factor is the growing

¹¹ Kalbe Ali, Who is leading this sit-in? DAWN, March 29, 2016 available at <https://www.dawn.com/news/1248570>

following among the young, relatively educated Karachi population. TLP managed to win seat from Karachi and this factor alone could be a challenge to deal with violent extremism and intolerance. These people, mostly from low income area, residing in urban setting are fast joining the cadres of TLP with a sense of empowerment which they otherwise do not enjoy in class based social setting.¹²

India: The Rise of Saffron Brigade

India has been actively projecting its image as a greatest democracy based on religious pluralism and diversity within the framework of secular constitution. However, the rise of religiously motivated self-righteous behavior to establish a Hindu state has made such deep dents in the polity that would require re-hauling of the socio-political system for decades. The reason behind this dent is the rise of *saffron brigade* or the RSS ideologues.

The major aim of the organization was to motivate and mobilize youth for Hindutva and bring a cultural unity. The objective was to have a force of followers who can work for Hindu unity. Hindu nationalists exploiting religious sentiments asserted that the Hindus need discipline and organization to resist the aggression. Ideologically RSS follows the teaching of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar who coined the term Hindutva to create a collective Hindu identity. Politically Hedgewar, who was the first Chief of the RSS and his successor Golwalkar laid the foundation for Hindu mobilization. The RSS branded itself as a cultural organization. It believed that "Hindus as a collective community were threatened by the

¹² Ahmed Yusuf, "What is Behind the sudden Rise of TLP", DAWN, August 5, 2018, available at <https://www.dawn.com/news/1425085>

outsiders particularly the Muslims. Hence, it set out to create a martial brand of Hinduism by reshaping the mind and body of the Hindus in order to make them warrior-like."¹³

The RSS stresses on cultural unity, but in practice, it promotes its political agenda of Hindu *Rashtra* with an objective of a Hindu India, the idea of a monolithic Hindu Identity runs deep in the agenda of RSS.

Politics of Populism: Unleashing the Youth

In Pakistan, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is known for mobilizing the youth and ensuring victory in 2018 election. The success of PTI in attracting the young members in their sit in made an example to follow by relatively smaller groups who found it an apt strategy to gather people at city's important point to make it to the news. Taking the lead from PTI, a small *Barelvi* group, TLP paralyzed Islamabad-Rawalpindi, and eventually forced the government to accept all its demands. The show of power by exploiting a highly sensitive issue of sanctity of the Prophet (PBUH) was unexpected and sudden.

The *Barelvi* political narrative is based on victimhood at the hands of rival sects particularly the *Deobandis*. The hanging of Mumtaz Qadri strengthened the discourse through use of social media as well as public gatherings. *Barelvis* managed to make a space despite many differences within the *Barelvi* sects. People follow various saints and Sufis and claim their lineage, hence prevent any consolidated single leadership within the group. Nevertheless, *Tehreek Labaik* Pakistan has emerged as the group

¹³ Dyahadroy, Swati, "Chapter 1 available at http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/185093/9/07_chapter%201.pdf

transforming the silent majority to expressive politics. Due to the disillusionment among the people with politicians, many young first-time voters turned towards TLP to attain salvation as well as letting the mainstream political parties feel the pain of losing in election. The rise of TLP is more of anti-mainstream political parties and less for TLP itself. The feeling of discontent and anger found expression in spiritual submission that worked well for the *Braelvi* politics.

BJP's rise in power in Indian politics not only brought *Hindutva* in the forefront but socially it opened the gates for social transformation in the form of forced campaigns whether in the form of Gau Raksha (cow protection), beef ban or anti conversion from Hinduism to any other religion. While these campaigns did mobilize BJP followers, the young *Hindutva* followers found special interest in popular campaigns like RSS and VHP's Ghar Wapsi and Bahu Lao Beti Bachao to counter *Love Jihad* myth all across India.¹⁴ The saffronization of young Indians has been going for many decades but BJP's current regime has accelerated it and its accommodative policies have provided a political space to religious extremism, young self-proclaimed *Sanghis* and *Bakhts* (RSS/BJP activists) have taken it as their duty to purify the nation by "eliminating evil".

Cow Vigilante

The unleashed youth in cities and villages have taken up the task for the 'sanctity' of cow. It is the reason for many violent episodes in India since

¹⁴ Hindu outfit plans 'beti bachao, bahu lao' campaign to counter love jihad, Hindustan Times, December 1, 2017 available at <https://www.hindustantimes.com/lucknow/hindu-outfit-plans-beti-bachao-bahu-lao-campaign-to-counter-love-jihad/story-HVxTzT8Vn8bAYmYNYVZysI.html>

the BJP coming to power in 2014. Common people found eating beef or trading cow are being lynched and killed by vigilante mobs in the name of defending Hindu values. BJP regime came up with a proposal of an electronic ID system to identify cows, the system is similar to the system for Indian citizen identity.¹⁵ Using "meat politics" government patronization of those involved in mob lynching to "protect" cow further encourages and provides space to act more violently against minorities.¹⁶ According to Delhi University historian Dwijendra Narayan Jha, cow being a sacred animal in Hinduism is a myth. But the myth or not, the young emotionally mobilized activists are not ready to listen to any research-based opinion, they are more interested in following the rhetoric that has been promoted for decades by the RSS and later BJP's members. The sane voices rejecting any historical or religious link to the "sanctity of" holy cow" could not stop the mob from murdering a 55-year-old Rajasthan dairy farmer, Pehlu Khan. He was brutally thrashed and the video went viral on social media. Ignoring condemnation and criticism, the Rajasthan home minister, Gulab Chand Kataria defended not only the act but praised the cow vigilante for doing a great job.¹⁷

¹⁵ C.P. Surendran, "Cows in India may get their own 'Adhaar card'", *Khaleej Times*, April 25, 2017, available at <http://www.khaleejtimes.com/international/india/cows-in-india-may-get-their-own-aadhaar-card>

¹⁶ Aftab Alam, "As Nationalism Surges in India, Cows Are Protected More Than Minorities", *US news*, May 1, 2017 available at <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2017-05-01/as-hindu-nationalism-grows-in-india-cows-are-protected-more-than-minorities>

¹⁷ Pehlu Khan killed by gau rakshaks in Alwar: Rajasthan home minister defends the mob, *First Post*, April 6, 2017, available at <https://www.firstpost.com/india/pehlu-khan-killed-by-gau-rakshaks-in-alwar-rajasthan-home-minister-defends-the-mob-3371150.html>

The Rise of the Yogi

It was rare in Indian politics for a religious leader who happens to be openly against the minorities particularly the Muslims to get to the top political position of Chief Minister of a province. Yogi Adityanath's electoral victory in Indian state of United Province which has significant Muslim population and traditionally has been defending country's constitutional secular character. Had it been to personal purity and religious obsession, it would not have been a big issue, but it is his extremist movement "*Hindu Yuvu Vahini*" (Hindu Youth Organization), which is known for controversies. Yogi Adityanath is known for his anti-minority rhetoric, in 2015, his organization instigated communal tension calling Aligarh Muslim university a nursery of terrorism.¹⁸ Same year, exploiting the youth, Yogi instigated people not to follow Muslim Bollywood celebrities by comparing the super star Shah Rukh Khan to most controversial figure Hafiz Saeed whom India accused of Mumbai attack. He did not stop here but labeled late Mother Teresa as part of a conspiracy to "Christianize" India.¹⁹ Adityanath got support from Hindu extremist across the country when he supported Donald Trump's immigrant ban and proposed similar ban in India.²⁰

Muslims are not the only minority facing the burnt, Indian Christians

¹⁸ Lalmani Verma, Adityanath's outfit terms AMU 'nursery of terrorism', The Indian Express, September 18, 2015

¹⁹ "Yogi Adityanath slams SRK, compares him with Hafiz Saeed", The Hindu, November 4, 2015 available at <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/yogi-adityanath-attacks-shah-rukh-khan-compares-him-with-hafiz-saeed/article7841809.ece>

²⁰ "BJP's Adityanath praises US Prez Trump's 'Muslim ban', recommends it for India", Hindustan Times, January 31, 2017 available at <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/bjp-s-adityanath-praises-us-prez-trump-s-muslim-ban-recommends-it-for-india/story-KVpanqzFOYdmX0LLoPHpEP.html>

face the ire of Hindu extremist as well. The Christian minority is vulnerable to Hindu extremism and this was documented by many international organizations. Holland based Christian human rights organization , Open Door stated that violence against Christians in India has increased since 2016 and many Churches have been destroyed and incidents of priests and nuns beating have been reported.²¹ The young Indian urban followers of RSS are fast taking the role of the vigilantes targeting couples belonging to different faiths specially if one of them happens to be Hindu. Indian boys belonging to faith other than Hinduism if found dating a Hindu girl are violently dealt with, extremist calling them "*Love jihadis*". These vigilantes have taken it to them to attack young couples resulting in casualties. The actions have government backing since yogi Adityanath took office of Chief Minister of UP. Even the police have taken the role of anti-Romeo squads.²²

Religious Mobilization: From Rural to Urban Areas

Traditionally, religious groups focused on rural areas for motivating and mobilizing the young followers as illiterate and lacking exposure have always been easy to be convinced without much logic and rationale. This trend changed with the change in strategy where the religious groups started focusing on young people in the cities using media and new innovations, making it attractive to increase the followers. The argument

²¹ "Christians in India increasingly under attack, study shows", The guardian, January 11, 2017 available at

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/11/christians-in-india-increasingly-under-attack-study-shows>

²² "UP 'anti-Romeo squads' to get more teeth", Times of India, July 15, 2018, available at <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/up-anti-romeo-squads-to-get-more-teeth/articleshow/64996016.cms>

of cosmic war that jugen Meyesmer has written extensively gets credence here, in most religious traditions, a conflict outcome is often considered a manifestation of God's will, the followers are made to believe that they are in a constant war which they have to win at any cost. Another important factor that plays an important role is when religion goes beyond faith to nationalism. BJP's rise on the basis of religious nationalism is a case in point. The shift of religion to religion-based nationalism from rural to urban areas, attracting educated middle class in cities and small towns is a significant development. In the words of Peter van der Veer, "To study these aspects - movements, discourses, practices, we need a shift in emphasis from the political scientist's study of political parties and voting behavior to anthropologist's study of religious movements and ritual action as

part of historical practices. It is feelings of collective belonging into religious nationalism".²³ The project of establishing a Hindu state which started with BJP in alliance with VHP and RSS motivated religious politics of reclaiming Ayodhya building Ram temple on place of Ayodhya mosque continued and enhanced the political space for BJP till its victory under Vajpae and later under the leadership of Modi from 2014 to date. The current regime's policy has given a free hand to RSS militants to establish their agenda of a *Hinduization*. With the inclusion of educated middle class guided by self-righteousness, the impact of their idea of a "Hindu India" is fast taking roots. Young Indian men and women locally called "*Bakhts*" or "*Sanghis*" make sure to ever present on the internet, using

²³ Peter van der Veer, " Religious Nationalism" University of California Press, Berkely, 1994, p-ix

facebook, twitter and whatsapp etc to spread their hate messages. They abuse the opponents using explicit, quoting religious texts justifying their hate.

Rise of Internet 'Hindu'

Sagarika Ghose, an Indian television anchor tweeted in 2010, "Internet Hindus are like swarms of bees, they come swarming after you".²⁴ The internet Hindus are right wing blogger and tweeters who followed her and reacted violently on her tweets. They are large in number and tech savvy, their aggressive presence with abusive rhetoric has put a mark on legislators' commitment to free speech. Some famous Indian artists like M. F. Hussain and filmmaker Deepa Mehta faced threats for the work the extremists deem insulting to Hinduism. Famous Indian journalist Barkha Dutt has been the target of hate speech and internet bullying. Very few of the intolerant Internet activists disclose their political or religious affiliation online, mostly they express their disdain for the Congress party. However, the fact of the matter is they sympathize with *Hindutva*, influenced by RSS and support BJP.

In the words of a 23 years old internet Hindu not yet a member of any political organization, "I want the Hindu dignity of India to be restored, we've had a glorious past but the Muslim invaders, the Mughals and the Brits destroyed our sense of pride. After independence, the [Congress] continued with that policy. It continued with blatant Muslims appeasement while Hindus were reduced to second-grade citizens in their

²⁴ Jason Overdorf, " India: Meet the 'Internet Hindus', Public Radio International (PRI), June 18, 2012 available at <https://www.pri.org/stories/2012-06-18/india-meet-internet-hindus>

own land."²⁵

According to an informal online survey, the Internet Hindus are mostly young, educated professionals with computer skills and command over English. The survey reveals, "more than half of them are under 30 years old, 80 percent have undergraduate or graduate degrees, and two-thirds of them earn more than \$10,000 a year — putting them on the high end of India's middle class."²⁶

According to the Lokniti report, titled *Attitudes, Anxieties and Aspirations of India's Youth: Changing Patterns*, "survey 2016 was based on 6,122 people between the ages of 15 and 34, across 19 Indian states, around 25% of the country's youth identifies itself with the BJP, making the party's base among the young, the biggest among all political parties. But it is worth noting that a majority of respondents do not identify with any political party."²⁷

Shrinking Intellectual Spaces in Universities

With BJP's patronage, the RSS, *Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi (AVBP)*, *Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP)* and the *Bajrang Dal* have gradually managed to hijack the public space. Not only threats to students and faculty by these groups but some of the universities have right wing vice chancellors sympathizing with ultra conservative mindset.²⁸ The

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Jason Overdorf, India: Meet the Internet Hindu", Global Post, June 18, 2012 available at <http://jasonoverdorf.blogspot.com/2012/06>

²⁷ Pankaj Madan, Mark Alexander Friedrich, " Attitudes, Anxieties and Aspirations of India's Youth: Changing Patterns", Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, April 3, 2017

²⁸ "Delhi University Teachers Association releases white paper against VC", India education review.com. August 5, 2014 available at <http://indiaeducationreview.com/delhi-university-teachers-association-releases-white-paper-against-vc/>

ABVP, particularly focused on top universities pursuing BJP agenda. That's because the majority of faculty members who enjoy considerable influence on students are left oriented and some of them are members of the communist party of India.²⁹ The young and educated in urban areas are getting "role models" in the form of right-wing successful professionals heading educational institutions and government departments. The government prefers top positions to those sympathetic to RSS and believe in *Hindutva* ideology.

Pakistan has had its share of urbanization of violence, with groups rising in favor of blasphemy and murdering minorities as well as fellow Muslim on the basis of "*Fatwas*" by the Imam of the mosques. Mob violence is a regular feature which even police finds it hard to control when faith is involved. Some politician though not member of extremist groups but publicly use issue of blasphemy to get public support. Pakistani intelligentsia got a great shock when a public display of anger and violence was carried out in Mardan university, where a young 23 years old Mashal Khan was murdered by the mob, comprising university students provoked by the speeches declaring Mashal Khan a blasphemer. The gruesome act of killing a young man at the campus should be enough to send shock waves in the society, but the reaction was divided, while many did condemn the act and government initiated legal process, there were

²⁹ Aftab Alam, "Growing intolerance is threatening free inquiry and open debate in India's universities". August 19, 2017, South Asia Journal, available at:-

<http://southasiajournal.net/growing-intolerance-is-threatening-free-inquiry-and-open-debate-in-indias-universities/>, see also Debobrat Ghose, "JNU provides atmosphere of free thinking to students, says varsity's only president from ABVP", First Post, February 26, 2016 available at <https://www.firstpost.com/politics/jnu-provides-atmosphere-of-free-thinking-to-students-says-varsitys-only-president-from-abvp-2642638.html>

many who still justified the act.

Mashal Khan's murder is the watershed that opens the flood gates on urban, educated extremists in Pakistan. While such acts are driven by mob mentality but there is a complete method into this madness. At the campuses, it is usually the student bodies who ignite the emotions of the young students, in offices and markets, professional jealousy is the motive used to blame an individual of committing blasphemy. Once an individual or a group is accused of blasphemy, it takes very little time to gather the crowd and incite for violence. Such is the state of emotional mobilization of religious followers.

The *Braelvi* extremists are rapidly capturing space through their presence in schools, colleges and universities using music and spiritual songs to attract the young students and professionals. Had it been a non-violent act of showing spiritual conviction, it wouldn't have been a problem, but while on their spiritual journey, these young souls get off track and find it hard to distinguish between intolerance, extremism and dedication and faith. They find it difficult to not to express violently if a person is found not convinced of their ideas. Since, they are urbanite, professionals or students, they have means of communications, having access to media, social site etc. They have successfully managed to control the public space, where an intellectual discussion of the framing of blasphemy law, review of the procedure can lead to death threats and even murder.

This shift of violent intolerance from rural to urban areas are even evident in the media, TV programs, discussions and even entertainment programs are careful not to mention any thing that could hurt the feelings of the *Bralevis*. Newspapers columnists have taken up self-censorship not to write

anything, intellectually great but not acceptable to the followers. *Tehreek-e-Labaik* (TLP) chief Khadim Hussain Rizvi exploiting the political polarization has managed to bring TLP from margins to the center stage city movement, remodeling the Islamization process.³⁰

Conclusion

Religious extremism and intolerant mindset are based on irrationality. Generally, followers of religious groups see their destiny as a result of the grand divine design. Economically marginalized or deprived ones start taking their worldly life as temporal. They do not see any benefit in utilizing their potential for physical and intellectual output but often lead a life of inactivity resulting into lack of economic and social development. It therefore ensures that they do not become part of the social development process. It does not allow them to contribute to the development of their family and society. On the contrary, they remain a burden for basic human needs.

Religious groups unlike political parties are sometimes referred as cults for two defining features. First, the tension between the group and its surrounding society and second, the high degree of control over the followers and supporters by the leaders. Often the reason for aggressive and violent behavior is due to the perceived threat from the outside, which could be their own society or the government, the "us versus them" phenomenon. Another reason could be solely a group leader's own perception, when challenged by others often calls for violence and justify

³⁰ Abdul Basit, "New Extremist Religious Groups Are Wrecking Pakistan", National Interest, December 24, 2017, available at <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/new-extremist-religious-groups-are-wrecking-pakistan-23779>

being victim who is forced to protect the group. As RAND report states, "when religious extremists are convinced that their cause is sacred and ordained by God, they are capable of savage and relentless violence and what is striking about "religious terrorism" is that "it is almost exclusively symbolic, performed in remarkably dramatic ways."³¹

Religious extremism in through RSS's exclusivist approach based on creating a Hindu state espouses a strong and militant religious philosophy. Their religious view, with its cosmic dimension, remains a threat to the idea of India as a secular state. India's situation is more alarming because here the idea of a democracy on the basis of inclusive approach is being challenged, it is more of illiberal democracy. BJP with its allies that include RSS, Shiv Sina claim to have won through democratic process. Religious extremism is being institutionalized through government's endorsement in India.

In case of Pakistan, the rising intolerant version of Sufi Islam that came to fore after Mumtaz Qadri's execution in the name of protection of blasphemy law is worrisome. The highly charged and aggressive anti blasphemy movement got approval of young Pakistanis particularly in Punjab and Sindh province. Yet, the recent elections showed the trend where the party on these slogans could not get significant votes. This brings us to the issue of political dynamics in both the countries. Religiously mobilized, aggressive parties are challenging the political process without rejecting the democratic process. Both in Pakistan and

³¹ Gregory F. Treverton, Heather S. Gregg, Daniel Gibran, Charles W. Yost, " Exploring Religious Conflict" RAND, 2005 , available at https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/conf_proceedings/2005/RAND_CF211.pdf 0098

India, BJP cadres and *TLP*'s followers are confident that they can bring a change within the system. This shows the behavioral change in the young voters, they are convinced that they are doing it rights within constitutional framework unlike the terrorists who reject the existing system. One question that arises is both RSS influenced extremism in India and *TLP*'s aggressive posturing is if these movements are really religious or political? This distinction is hard to parse. Religious extremists create stories, myths, narratives and commands from scriptures to justify their world view.

If right wing ultra conservative groups with motivation and mobilization continue their aggressive agenda within the democratic framework and continue to make their presence in the political space through votes in electoral process, this will define the concept of democracy. This normalization of religious extremism in politics will create exclusivist, intolerant and violent societies with grave implications on the economy, which would result in chaos and more violence thus destroying the very idea of liberal democratic order.

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Pakistan and the Challenge of Foreign Fighters

Faisal Ali Raja

Abstract

There is a dearth of literature on foreign fighters before the rise of ISIS in the Middle East. Hence the structural composition of these fighters and their spatial networking is not exactly known. Since the participation of mosaic of fighters as mujahedeen in Afghan jihad, the phenomenon of foreign fighters persists in different theatres of war. In the backdrop of Shia – Sunni split in the region and with an appreciable Shiite population in the country, the trend of raising private militias pervades through rank and file of Shiite groups as well. Moreover, the definitional quandary of ‘foreign fighters’ has also made it difficult to distinguish them from other such actors or elements in the available literature. The challenge of returning foreign fighters involves multiple complexities including prosecution, imprisonment, de-radicalization and post penalizing phase re-settlement where social repulsion and indifference may push them back to their original mindset. The paper suggests different proposals for reintegration of these returnees on account of their mode of apprehensions and detection so that the state and its institutions especially the Criminal Justice System can provide a permanent remedy for their re-education, re-cultivation and re-socialization.

Keywords: Militant, Fighters, Ideological, Political, State Actor

Definition of Foreign Fighters (FFs)

Before we start discussing foreign fighters, it is necessary to arrive at some sort of definition so as it distinguishes them from an insurgent, a terrorist

and a militant. Interestingly, there exist no proper definitions of a terrorist, a militant or an insurgent as the available literature abounds with different variations of these terms spreading on a wide spectrum on account of variegated conflict zone experiences or firsthand involvement of individuals in native/local extreme incidents. All these terminologies pivot on the intersection of political, religious and ideological trends with violence as their natural corollary. Therefore, we use the term ‘foreign fighter’, ‘insurgent’, ‘terrorist’ and ‘militant’ interchangeably. In order to reach at a distinct categorization, we need to divide religious, political and ideological narration into three shades. For example, we can segregate the term ‘political’ into purely-political, semi-political and apolitical respectively. Similarly, the term ‘religious’ can be sub divided into purely-religious, semi-religious and secular. Lastly the term ‘ideological’ can be branched into purely-ideological, semi-ideological and non-ideological accordingly. The violence is categorized as action against the state institutions or the people living in the geographical boundaries of a country.

Difference between an Insurgent, a Terrorist, a Militant and a Foreign Fighter¹

An insurgent is a person who is fighting against a state or a government and frequently resorts to violence which in majority of cases is directed towards Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) or state institutions without any or semi-religious base to achieve the political objectives. Whereas, a terrorist is person who may have a political motive but should contain shades of ideological or religious penchant and uses public centric violence as a means

¹ While defining different terms assistance has been taken from Collins English Dictionary in delineating one term or terms from the other.

to achieve the aim. A militant is an individual who often fights for a political or ideological cause and can resort to violence anytime anywhere. This clearly indicates that a militant has a level of training in weapon usage and handling and knows how to fire ammunition with appreciable consistency.

The words like ‘radical’ and ‘extremist’ can now be explained on the basis of definitions of the three terms. A radical or an extremist is a person who is in a dynamic state since such an individual is constantly accepting and negating certain ideas or beliefs psychologically and metastasizing concepts during an evolutionary phase through different means of experiences and impressions.

Once we have explained these terms it may now become quite easy to enunciate the terminology of ‘foreign fighter’. The term ‘foreign fighter’ can therefore be applied to a person who travels abroad through different means to participate in a conflict for multiple reasons. These may be financial, ideological, religious or sectarian to name the few. Moreover, a foreign fighter may also pass through a dynamic phase of extremism and radicalization to arrive at a stage where he or she is mentally ready to participate in a journey of active battlefield experience.

The diagram indicates political-ideological-religious leaning along x-axis whereas different violence trends are depicted along y-axis. Thus, we have the whole spectrum of Ideological – Religious - Political, Non-Ideological – Secular - Apolitical, Violence-against-State-Institutions and Public-Centric-Violence spectrum along the axes. These definitions have been graphically represented in the format below.

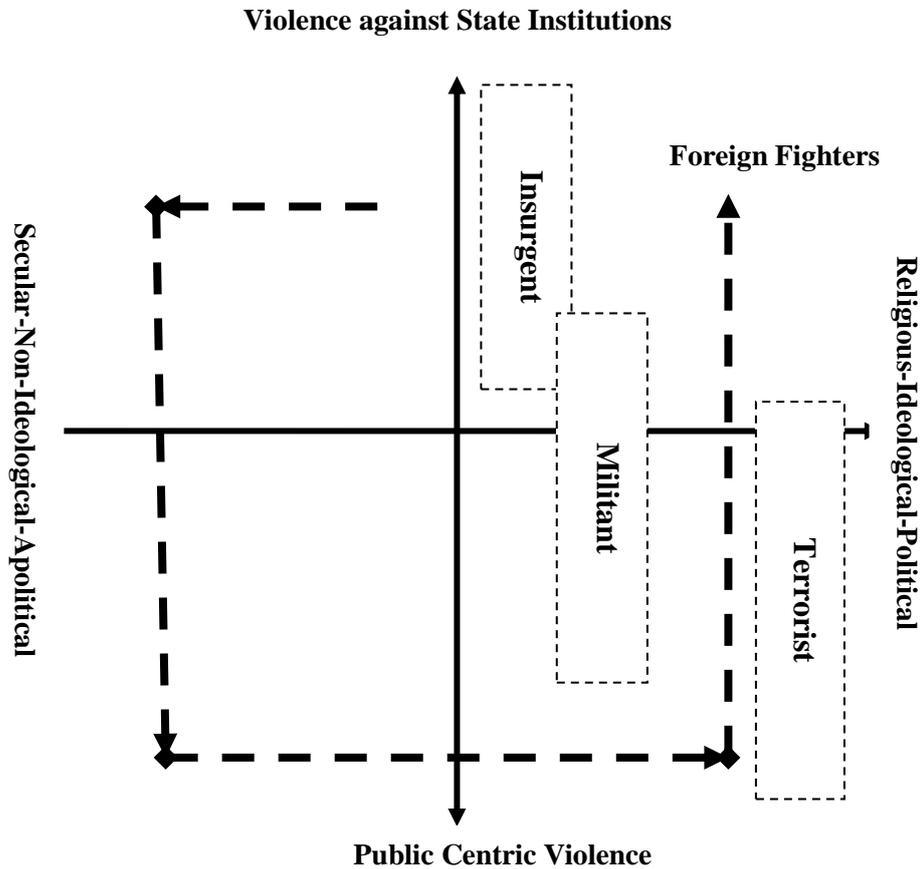


Figure: 01

The domain of the foreign fighters therefore rests on all four quadrants. Hence, we have different shades of foreign fighters including one who may not have active experience of battlefield but is surely susceptible to radical views. Such category of foreign fighters is most often used as the battleground fodder or is utilized for technical expertise if they have a skill or a set of skills at their disposal.

Research Questions

There is a lot of literature available on foreign fighters especially in post

ISIS emergence period and though distinction has been made on sectarian basis but their mode of travel outside the countries of their origin remains an enigma. Moreover, the motivation mechanism of these fighters has never been discussed in structural format which might help us in comprehending different tiers of recruitment, training and travel routes. Furthermore, to what extent do these fighters able to alter the course of a conflict?

The answers to these questions provide the basis of a theoretical framework for action against these individuals on policy making level.

Methodology

A qualitative technique has been adopted as the principal methodology to carry out the research on the topic. A sample of relevant and experienced officers has been selected who have actively been dealing with this phenomenon for a considerable period of time. These officers provide the theoretical details on basis of their practical experiences during the course of their service across Pakistan².

Literature Review

The available material on foreign fighters is related to western countries and their inherent insecurity syndrome which has become an indispensable part

² These officers belong to different service groups including Police Service of Pakistan (PSP), Inland Revenue Service (IRS), Frontier Constabulary (FC), Counter Terrorism Departments (CTDs) and Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) respectively. Majority of these officers are field officials and have spent a considerable period in dealing with various issues ranging from human smuggling to illegal migrants and border crossers in the country. Some of these officers have had exposure of interaction with international bodies monitoring such activities. An effort has been made to dovetail the narration of these officials with the existing literature in order to debate the oft quoted numbers of foreign fighters and their mode of recruitment and travel. Different theoretical models have also been discussed of their recruitment bordering on direct or indirect cyber and physical means respectively.

of their collective strategic thinking. For example, Elena Pakalova (2019) states that Islamist foreign fighters pose two types of challenges for the western countries. First, they are a threat to homeland security and many have already demonstrated their ideological affiliation with Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) by being involved in home-based attacks. Second, these fighter returnees have also started sharing their battleground experiences and spreading extremism to expand their existing networks and co-opt new recruits for future operations³. The experience sharing is not defined in structural format and the process type adopted to convince their audience to follow their path of glorified accomplishments.

Interestingly, the documentary evidence of involvement of battlefield returnees in incidents of terrorism is available in Pakistan. For example, several accounts exist where suspects or those reportedly involved in an incident of terror had had previous battleground experience. The elements involved in GHQ attack in 2009 were all experienced militants⁴. Similarly, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and its affiliates took part in attacks on naval bases in Karachi⁵. However, Kecper Rekawek (2016) discusses the threat which foreign fighters pose to a wide number of countries and mode of policy differential to deal with such challenging environment. He also elaborates that many countries have contributed significant numbers of these fighters to conflict zones without experiencing any home-based terrorism incident. He therefore cautions all the countries whose citizens have taken part in various conflict zones including Iraq and Syria against

³ Elena Pakalova, “*Returning Islamist Foreign Fighters: Threats and Challenges to the West*”, (Palgrave Macmillan: 2019), 5-10.

⁴ Anwar Iqbal, “The military identifies militants as the new enemy”, Dawn, May 3, 2014.

⁵ Anne Stenersen, “*The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan’s Role in Attacks in Pakistan*”, Combating Terrorism Center, Volume 7, Issue 7, July 2014.

the retaliatory actions of the returnee fighters⁶. The model of deterrence to preempt an individual from initiating terror should have a framework with appreciable room of social modulation.

Interestingly, societies where tribalism persists or its spirit is imbued in the social norms and mores, conscription in such cultural set-ups becomes a social obligation. This has been observed when tribesmen assisted their Muslim brothers in different conflicts including Kashmir in 1948⁷. Phil Gurski (2017) raises an important point while discussing why westerners have volunteered to join as foreign fighters in conflict zones like Iraq and Syria. He draws a comparison between the mandatory military-service for the civilians and tries to find out the enticing factors for a person to join a military expedition and then compares it with the present day Islamic western fighters. He also proposes significant internal security mechanism to counter the returnees of the conflict zones⁸.

The successful actions of certain groups or networks within countries give significance to the members and/or individuals connected with these networks. These successes generate or regenerate demands of foreign fighters and vice versa⁹. The group benefit may not be synonymous to individual gains in terms of experience, expertise and enterprise. Jean-Francois Ratelle and Laurence Broers (2018, eds.) state how foreign fighters over a spectrum of large geography involving Caucasus, Central Asia, the

⁶ Kecer Rekawek (ed.), *Not Only Syria? The Phenomenon of Foreign Fighters in a Comparative Perspective*, (IOS Press: 2017), v.

⁷ Mohammad Ilyas Khan, *Partition 70 years on: When tribal warriors invaded Kashmir*, BBC News, October 22, 2017.

⁸ Phil Gurski, *Western Foreign Fighters: The Threat to Homeland and International Security*, (Rowman & Littlefield:2017)

⁹ Hassan Abdullah, "Foreign militants seeking 'safe passage'", Dawn, April 25, 2014.

Middle East and Ukraine move towards conflict zones under different motivating factors. The concept of networked insurgencies is unique as they help in propagating propaganda of insurgents due to weak security governance regimes of different countries which finally facilitate the militancy¹⁰. Similarly, Daniel Byman (2019) in his works tries to evaluate phenomenon of foreign fighters analytically. He then delves upon the motivation factors and in the end discusses different distinct phases including radicalization, decision making, travelling to foreign lands, returning home and thinking beyond the plot stage to deter them effectively¹¹.

In terms of foreign fighters' participation base, we have seen that co-sectarians have taken part in inland or outland military excursions to support their own co-sects¹². David Malet (2016) studied 331 conflicts across the globe and was able to find the phenomenon of foreign fighters in only 70 of such civil conflicts. These conflicts spread over a period 1816-2005 with majority ended in incumbent's victory as only 32 are ongoing and 24 resulted into stalemate. He has divided the foreign fighters into four categories namely co-ethnic in ethnic conflicts, non-co-ethnics in ethnic conflicts, co-ethnics in non-ethnic conflicts and non-co-ethnics in non-co-ethnic's conflicts. The last category has the highest numbers of foreign fighters' participation¹³.

¹⁰ Jean-Francois Ratelle, and Laurence Broers (eds.), "Networked Insurgencies and Foreign Fighters in Eurasia", (Taylor & Francis:2018)

¹¹ Daniel Byman, "Road Warriors: Foreign Fighters in the Armies of Jihad", (Oxford University Press: 2019), 2-8.

¹² Heather M. Robinson, Ben Connable, David E. Thaler and Ali G. Scotten "Sectarianism in the Middle East: Implications for the US", RAND Corporation, 2018.

¹³ David Malet," Foreign Fighters: Transnational Identity in Civic Conflicts", (Oxford University Press: 2013), 40-58.

Online radicalization and extremism is an effective way to mobilize fighters for military expeditions. This phenomenon has gained currency worldwide and in Pakistan it may become one of the main challenges in coming years¹⁴. Ömer Behram Özdemir and Tuncay Kardaş (2014) have studied the phenomenon of European fighters on three different strands including identity claims, motives and means of radicalization. The authors highlight role of social media in mobilization and radicalization of such fighters. The estimates of Europeans participating in Syrian war are nearly 2500 as compared to 25000 – 31500 fighters from 80 countries participating in the event¹⁵.

Foreign Fighters (FFs) and the Rise of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)

The foreign fighters (FFs) have been creating ripples in European countries for last many years. The multi-cultural European polity with appreciable Muslim population is apprehensive of these individuals in a post Islamic State (IS) withdrawal from Syria and in the backdrop of the reported elimination of Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi, the IS leader. The true estimation of ISIS fighters is about 25,000 – 30,000 since the declaration of Al Baghdadi's Caliphate in a mosque at Mosul in 2014. The concept of Caliphate has romanticized many young men round the globe and acted as a magnet to attract youthful participation in the battle fronts on the plains in Iraq and Syria. Many cited that the indoctrination made by Al Maqdisi and Al Zarqawi has finally evolved in the shape of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria

¹⁴ Afeera Firdous, “*On line extremism in Pakistan: A slow poison*”, South Asian Voices, December 11, 2017.

¹⁵ Ömer Behram Özdemir, Tuncay Kardaş, “*The Making of European Foreign Fighters*”, (SETA: 2014), 5-8.

(ISIS)¹⁶. The recent withdrawal of ISIS from war theatre in Syria may indicate a temporary defeat but the foreign fighters affiliated with the group are looking for either new conflict zones or returning to their countries of origin to strengthen themselves through instituting online radicalization silently to expand their networks in their native states¹⁷.

Why do the Numbers Matter?

Over a period of five years (2014-19), an estimated number of 25,000 – 32,000 ISIS fighters indicate that these individuals have been coming without any interruption from different countries across the globe¹⁸. Such countries fall in different regions including Europe, North America, Middle East, Asia and Asian Pacific regions. Many fighters are adept in bomb making, internet surfing, chemical explosives innovation, improvised explosive devices synthesis and online radicalization manipulation. Moreover, on their return to the countries of their origin these fighters may struggle to occupy some physical space which serves them in manipulating the existing social environment for various reasons. This may lead towards creating public chaos and disorder thus making it difficult for the state to initiate an action which may contain high kinetic component for any counter terrorism (CT) operation. Given the capacity of these countries in terms of

¹⁶ Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi is considered to be the spiritual leader of *Salfi-Jihadism* ideology. His followers include Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi who was leader of Al Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and later on a guide to the formation of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Initially, many followers toed the thinking of Al-Maqdisi before they parted ways and reverted to extreme theory of management of savagery to inflict maximal pain to their adversaries devoiding Al-Maqdisi to play any role among the members of violent Islamic groups. Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi was killed in a drone strike in 2006.

¹⁷ Michael Moutot, "What happened to all foreign fighters of IS?", *Dawn*, December 17, 2017.

¹⁸ Richard Barrett, "*Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign fighters and the threat of returnees*", The Soufan Center, October 31, 2017, 12-15.

urban CT operations is quite weak, the natural corollary is that the fighters can have the potential to cause dissension among the polity of the country. The Interpol has been running a whole gamut of modules to deal with the potential catastrophe of a chemical attack by these elements on an individual or collective level in a European country with massive fallout in the neighboring regions as well. They are also cognizant of the fact that once such tactics prove successful with large scale casualties, ISIS may encourage and replicate such actions in active theatres of war¹⁹. Therefore, numbers of fighters do matter not only in dissemination of their narratives but also creating a human recruitment base among the population of a country.

Is there any Possible Action Plan against the Returnees?

Many western countries have devised de-radicalization mechanisms for the foreign fighters who have been intercepted through three main procedures. First, when these fighters are apprehended in other countries and subsequently handed over to their countries of origin. Second, the fighters who are caught from the battlefield or active war theatres and later on sent back to their own native lands after formalizing the process of registration. Third, these elements are detected in the home countries through effective surveillance and CT investigation on account of sophisticated technology and modern gadgetries. These fighters once captured on anyone of the above mechanism may need to be prosecuted on various counts and then undergo de-radicalization program in a correction facility or an independent unit. For this purpose, the de-radicalization should have all the components to

¹⁹ Ronald K. Noble, "Keeping science in the right hands: Policing the new biological frontier," Foreign Affairs, January 2020.

convince these individuals to shun their thinking pattern and return to their post militant life phase. It is a gigantic task and the results of many such programs indicate that as the opportunity arises, these fighters revert back to their old ways and refuse to respond to external conscientious reformation efforts.

There is also a level of contagiousness attached with these fighters when they are incarcerated in different prisons or correction facilities. Many of them may resort to preaching or indulge in dissemination of radical ideas among the inmates making it extremely difficult for the authorities to isolate such elements from the rest.

In order to evaluate the intensity of foreign fighters challenge for Pakistan it is important that we assess the numbers from various quarters²⁰ and then try to evaluate their impact on the existing social condition. Such impact has to examine the underlying reasons which encourage these individuals to participate in battlefronts in various war zones.

Classification of Foreign Fighters

Before we discuss the numbers of these foreign fighters, it is important that we classify different streams of fighters travelling from Pakistan and participating in an active war theatre to foreign lands. We have therefore categorized it into three groups namely (i) Shiite Fighters (ii) Sunni fighters

²⁰ The total numbers of these fighters are still unclear, nonetheless, we can make a prediction based on numbers of illegal migrants especially those who have been intercepted by Pakistani authorities and/or Iranian forces while making their way to Turkish border. Moreover, the available data with counter terrorism department (CTD) Punjab also provide us a range of probable numbers of foreign fighters leaving the country for conflict zones abroad. Keeping in view these factors, the approximate numbers of these fighters from Punjab fluctuate between 300<FF<500.

other than those affiliated with ISIS (iii) Sunni fighters attached with ISIS²¹.

Shiite Fighters

The sectarian turf in Pakistan was intensified in the fall of 1979 as Iran braced for the Islamic Revolution brought about by Ayatollah Khomeini. The incident was synchronized with invasion of USSR in Afghanistan thus sending ripples of nervousness in the power corridors of Pakistan. The country was literally sandwiched between the Shiite Islam on the one hand and rise of communist ideology on the other. As the Saudi Arabia and USA stepped into the Afghan cauldron, the sectarian landscape in Pakistan underwent a drastic change. The statistics indicate that number of sectarian incidents peaked during the period stretching from 1984 till the end of the last century. A sharp peak can also be observed in post 2001 phase as USA attacked Afghanistan to take out Taliban regime in the back drop of 9/11 attacks on American soil²².

The intensification of sectarian warfare was also coupled with rise of many sectarian organizations in the country. This has probably enhanced Shiite funding and assistance in Pakistan since they largely view it as a corollary of Shia-Sunni animosity in Af-Pak region. As a large number of foreign fighters started pouring in to join Afghan jihad, the Shiite faction saw it as a legitimate cause of concern and they began working on mobilization and raising of informal cadres of diehard militants to fight for their co-sects.

²¹ Though we have defined three streams of foreign fighters nonetheless in the research article the two Sunni groups are clubbed together while discussing mode of recruitment, training, escape routes and type of radicalization processes the individual fighters have to go through while travelling from the inland to a place in the foreign lands. The financial assistance package is also discussed in the same vein.

²² Khaled Ahmed, "*Sectarian War: Pakistan's Sunni – Shia Violence and its Links to the Middle East*", (OUP Pakistan: 2012), 5-16.

These fighters were deployed for multipurpose including protection of Shiite sites, securing places of worships, acting as *razakars* or volunteers for safety of shia processions and religious ceremonies, fighting for shia ideology in conflict zones especially in Iraq and Syria²³.

The initial reported incidents in early 2011-12 highlighted two distinct groups who were believed to include fighters recruited from shia majority areas in Pakistan to protect the shrines of Hazrat Zainab and other revered personalities buried in Iraq and Syria. These groups were called *Zainabyoun* and *Fatimeyoun*. In July 2013, a rocket attack near the shrine of Hazrat Zainab killed many pilgrims including Pakistanis along with the security guards deputed at the place. Initially the recruitment was carried out from Kuram Agency and Hangu regions whose Shiite are believed to be fiercest and strongest in terms of their resilience and physique²⁴. They were, at first, considered as part of an Afghan contingent but later on other areas were included in the list for Shiite fighters' contribution.

This enhanced Shiite recruitment base in the country is also the direct consequence of an alliance between *Wilaya Khurasan* affiliates and anti-Shiite forces in the local sectarian landscape of the country. Interestingly, third largest Shiite population resides in Pakistan followed by India and Iran respectively. The total Shiite population in the country ranges from 25 to 30 million along with sizable sectarian enclaves in Iraq and Yemen as well²⁵. In December 2016, an electronic poster appeared on social media in which

²³ Abdul Ghani Kakar, "Iran's Zainabiyoun brigade steps up recruiting in Pakistan", October 5, 2018,

https://pakistan.asia-news.com/en_GB/articles/cnmi_pf/features/2018/10/05/feature-02.

²⁴ Zubair Azam and Khurram Iqbal, "Shiite Mobilization and the Transformation of Sectarian Militancy in Pakistan", Middle East Institute, March 27, 2019

²⁵ World Shia Population, <http://shianumbers.com/shia-muslims-population.html>

Ayatollah Khamenei was greeting the *Zainabyoun* of Pakistan for their loyalties and services for the security and safety of Shiite cause in Iraq and Syria²⁶.

a. Motivation and Travelling Routes

The principal motivation is based on ideological, sectarian and religious factors. The vernacular language which explains and motivates the locals in their own tongue makes it extremely easy for a local moderator to entice a group of emotionally charged Shiite to travel to a far-flung area for further coaching and training. The available means of communication is social media, internet based selective websites or local seminaries and places of worship. In many instances, a house converted into religious place becomes an ideal location for such activity. Majority of these Shiite fighters are believed to have travelled in the garb of pilgrims in groups so that authorities have minimal suspicion on their being involved in any such activities. A number of infrequent routes exist which are reportedly been undertaken to cross the border and enter into Afghanistan or Iran en bloc. These routes exist on account of large porous border, small number of security forces and lack of effective monitoring mechanism at the international borders. Sometimes specific groups are involved in human smuggling having wide networking making it quite easier for them to take individuals across the border.

The smuggled fighters have been used in Iraq, Syria and Yemen to confront the onslaught of Saudi-backed bloc. These fighters have been equipped to

²⁶ Convey my greetings to the Zeynabyoun of Pakistan: Imam Khamenei, Khamenei.IR, <http://english.khamenei.ir/photo/4411/Convey-my-greetings-to-the-Zeynabiyoun-of-Pakistan-Imam-Khamenei>.

wage a sophisticated irregular warfare and are quite adept in extreme weather to survive²⁷. Moreover, advanced technology manipulation and use of local facilities to construct innovative explosive devices to inflict maximum damage to the adversaries have also been imparted to these fighters.

On October 27, 2016 a two-storied building collapsed in Lahore under mysterious circumstances killing one and injuring six inmates. Later on it was discovered that the building caved in due to explosion and CTD recovered 11 grenades and some explosive material from the site. The inmates were Shiite and it was believed that the family was involved in supplying ammunition to either a group or individuals for transportation abroad²⁸. The important thing is that these Shiite were apparently businessmen involved in scrap transportation but were reportedly involved in providing explosive to different Shiite groups for a wide spectrum of reasons. The seemingly secretive way to hide real purpose and inability of Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) along with intelligence networks to detect it speaks volumes about the success of such small Shia groups.

b. Incentives and Packages

The fighters get training on foreign soil through experienced men who impart important techniques and exercises for survival in tough situation. Those who agree to join the group are given different packages which vary in terms of financial benefits as the intensity in war theatre increases. These packages include monthly stipends that runs in thousands of foreign

²⁷ Colin Clark and Philip Smyth, "The Implications of Iran's Expanding Shi'a Foreign Fighter Network," CTS Sentinel, Volume 10, Issue 10, November 27, 2017.

²⁸ Imran Gabol, "One killed, six injured in roof collapse after explosion," Dawn, October 27, 2016.

currency notes, a considerable number of layoff period after every quarter, free visits of shrines and sacred places in holy cities and provision of assistance to a fighters' family members or children in case someone loses vital organs or is incapacitated or even perished during the conflict.

In some of the cases, if a fighter survives multiple tasks he might be promoted and used as a recruiter and/or an assistant trainer for running training camps on foreign soil. Such a fighter turned trainer or recruiter has three advantages over the other fighters. First, he is an experienced person who knows how to deal with different tasks and targets. Second, he understands the local language and the ordeal through which a person has to go through while being transported from his hometown to a foreign land. He can judge well who can fare well under these circumstances. Third, he can explain the new recruits the art of survival in battlefield. Moreover, as he is promoted, he gets more incentives and financial assistance for his persistent motivation and contribution.

c. Numbers: Estimation and Assessment

The numbers of the Shiite fighters is still not exactly known. We can make a rough guess on the basis of annual pilgrim data and the deportation ratio of Shiite persons a certain assessment about number of foreign fighters travelling to and for the country can be made. A rough estimate cited in one of the newspapers indicated that 150 – 160 pilgrims went missing who were on a spiritual journey to foreign lands and did not return back in last few years²⁹. In 2015 a report published in Reuters cited that 53 pictures of Shiites posted on a twitter account who were reportedly perished while fighting in

²⁹ “Why are Pakistani Shiites ‘disappearing?’” Deutsche Welle (DW) News, July 9, 2019.

Syria and were believed to be from Pakistan³⁰.

Whereas a British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) report cited that nearly 1,000 - 1600 Pakistani Shiite were fighting alongside Asad regime in Syria. The report also quoted that within a span of two years (2016-18) nearly 140 Shiite pilgrims went missing and nearly 100 died in the war zones whose families were receiving financial assistance from foreign countries³¹.

Sunni Fighters

The fighters who participated in Afghan jihad came from Sunni sect with predominantly belonging to *Deobandi* school of thought. After the withdrawal of USSR from Afghanistan, the Taliban regime which swept through length and breadth of the country belonged to the same sectarian leanings. By the end of 1980, a wide range of these fighters, also known as *mujahideen*, belonging to a wide spectrum of nationalities and ethnic groups became part and parcel of Afghan War. These included Uzbeks, Hazaras (Shiites), Pashtuns, Tajiks, Turkmen, Baluch, Kyrgyz, Pamiri, Aimak, Nurustani, Arabs, Ughurs, Philipines and others. All of these fighters belonged to the same Sunni branch of Islam pegged strongly at the ideology of Saudi Arabia. As Taliban extended their stronghold in Afghanistan in the fall of 1994, they controlled the whole territory with few pockets of resistance by the end of 1996. As the Taliban regime established its stronghold the number of Sunni fighters kept on coming and joining them

³⁰ Asad Hashim and Laila Bassam, "Iran recruits Pakistani Shi'ites for combat in Syria", Reuters, December 10, 2015.

³¹ "The story of Pakistan's 'disappeared' Shias", British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) News, May 31, 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-44280552>

from time to time for multiple purposes³².

As the 9/11 dawned on United States, it retaliated and the Taliban regime was dismantled within days and converted into classical insurgency format. The template of such irregular warfare was complex and based on human resource contributed by foreign fighters especially those from neighboring countries. Many foreign fighters returned to their home countries after the US attacked Afghanistan to dislodge the regime.

According to estimation, nearly four times as many Sunni fighters are operating in different theatres of war than at the time of twin tower incident in 2001. Moreover, an independent study conducted in 2018 estimates nearly 230,000 Sunni fighters battling in 70 countries across the globe³³. Three findings are indicated in the study. First, the groups of these Sunni fighters are quite potent and have capability to inflict damage at hotspots. Second, the social media-based activities generate quite an appreciable avenue of funding and monetary assistance to these Sunni fighters. Third, the resilience of these fighters is such that they can withstand difficult environment for a long period of time as can be seen in Iraq and Syria³⁴.

a. Motivation and Travelling Routes

The porous Pak – Afghan border provides the easiest route of travel for an ordinary person from Pakistan to Afghanistan and vice versa. It was used by majority of the Sunni fighters during the peak of Afghan war. Moreover, the

³² N.Nojumi, "The Rise of Taliban in Afghanistan: Mass mobilization, Civil War and the Future of the Region", (Palgrave Macmillan US: 2016), 7-30.

³³ Eric Schmitt, "Number of Sunni militants have quadrupled since 9/11 terror attacks, US think-tank claims", The Independent, November 21, 2018.

³⁴ Ibid

Durand Line has divided many tribes and even villages and as a result the border crossing becomes a normal practice. Here the structure of motivation is based on psychological coaching and encouragement. Each person in the structural composition has a designation which is linked to an Islamic ideology. For example, individuals who guide and teach such fighters in the art of practical warfare skills are commonly known as '*ustaad*' and those responsible to instruct them to migrate to another land are termed as '*mohtamim hijra*' or supervisor of migration. Similarly, a set of individuals are given the mandate to extend security and safety of these fighters while migrating from a place within the country to a place located outside Pakistan.

Unlike Shiite fighters, the maximum benefit of these fighters is accrued by area supervisor who arranges for a number of such individuals and then sends them to *mohtamim hijra* for further transportation. There exist three important routes which have been commonly used by majority of these fighters. The first route meanders through Peshawar, Jamrood, Landi Kotal, Torkum and from there they enter into Afghanistan. The most frequent destination of these fighters is Nanghar and other adjoining Taliban controlled areas inside Afghanistan. In case of transnational Sunni organizations like Al Qaeda or Al Qaeda in Indian Sub-Continent (AQIS) the mode of transfer is very secretive and even their messages on different social media based chat rooms and applications are very difficult to decipher or decode. Moreover, the number of security providers to these fighters may also run into pluralistic structures. Each local area '*ameer*' may be activated to supervise the safe transfer of these fighters to their destination. Sometimes when a very sensitive transportation is to be made then even

ameers of adjoining areas are not aware about any such movement. Whereas in case of local groups movement such as members of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan the level of secrecy and security mechanism is of lower or moderate level.

The second route is frequently being used by ISIS affiliated Sunni fighters who intend to travel to Iraq and Syria to fight against the elements who are at loggerheads with ISIS. This route starts from any part of Punjab and snakes through different areas till it ends up at Dalbadeen in or near Quetta. From there it goes to Iranian border at Taftan and crosses over into Iran and reaches Mirjawah. It then leads to Shiraz, Urmia and then reaches the Turkish border and crosses into Dogo Bias which assists them in reaching at the Syrian border. Most of these fighters enter Turkey in garb of illegal migrants vying to reach Greece and from there to other European cities for better and brighter future. The city Dogo Bias also teems with Syrian refugees and it becomes quite easy for these fighters to mingle with them and enter Syria.

The third most popular route goes through Karachi. Once a set of fighter reaches at the port city they are transported to Jiwani or Gawadar, whichever is easier to access, and from there proceed to Bandar Abbas or Chahbahar then to Shiraz, Urmia and eventually crosses in Turkey at Dogo Bias and finally reach in Syria. Such fighters take both land and water routes to reach at their destination in Syria. The second and third routes are predominantly used by ISIS affiliated fighters. These routes were also used by the families

of these fighters as well at the height of Syrian crisis in 2015-17³⁵.

The chief motivation to these fighters ranges from family protection, religiosity connected with eternal reward and monetary assistance as well. Among these factors perhaps the religiosity feeling is the most important one since it provides an easy way out to the current difficulties such individuals experience physically and psychologically. We have seen how young men from well off or financially stable families have participated in acts of terrorism which have expanded the length and breadth of reach of *ameers* of these fighters who can manipulate their thinking patterns and convince them to take up arms for a higher purpose and cause. The incident of Safoora Goth has already highlighted how these elements operate in a highly polarized society to goad a mind suffering from psychological ailments and personal issues³⁶. All transnational terror organizations are very secretive and utilize social media selectively unlike ISIS who have emerged as the most potent users of social media. It appears that Al Qaeda and other such like organizations have been looked upon as fore-runners in the utilization of social media by other localized groups.

Among Taliban the local attachment is perhaps the most important reason

³⁵ The data of Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) indicates that an abnormally high numbers of illegal migrants use the second and third routes for human transportation and smuggling. All three routes including air, water and land have been utilized for human trafficking. There are 14 air routes available through which a person first travels to United Arab Emirates or Istanbul or Central Asian Republics (CARs) or South America and finally ends up in European Union (EU) territory (such as Italy) or United States of America. Similarly 1196 kilometers long Pak – Iran border provides ample spaces or points or routes to such travelers to enter into Iran and from there they are transported to the Turkish border. Once they are in Turkey they cross over into Greece and from there they can enter into EU countries other than Greece. Here *Izmir, Athens, Peloponnese, Limnos* and *Siirt* are the favorite destination cities of these illegal migrants wherefrom they move towards their destination of choice.

³⁶ “IS recruiting trained professionals from Pakistan”, Dawn, March 2, 2016.

for a person to become part and parcel of the force. Many secondary fighters join the main Taliban force on account of external intervention to dislodge the clandestine networks of insurgents operating at district and village level³⁷. Among the principal intrinsic factors for IS fighters include spiritual cause and purity of purpose, whereas extrinsic motivational factors range from financial benefit to security and safety of their family members at home or in conflict zones³⁸.

b. Training and Incentives

There exists both structural and non-structured recruitment and training of ISIS fighters. The structured recruitment includes schooling, enlistment and indoctrination. The training sessions encompass weapon handling, aiming and shooting practices, strength and endurance exercises, tactics on engagement in the battlefield, specialization of tasks and conducting starvation practice. An evaluator is constantly monitoring the progress of each trainee and those he thinks are not up to the mark are directed to undergo the process again³⁹.

Many other groups experience un-structured training sessions which are carried on need basis as and when an imminent requirement arises due to battlefield demand.

³⁷ David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla: Fighting small wars in the midst of a big one*, (Oxford University Press: 2011). 23-30.

³⁸ Jacqueline Howard, "What motivates ISIS fighters -- and those who fight against them", CNN, September 4, 2017.

³⁹ Asaad Almohammad, *ISIS Child Soldiers in Syria: The Structural and Predatory Recruitment, Enlistment, Pre-Training Indoctrination, Training, and Deployment*, International Center for Counter Terrorism (The Hague), 20 – 17.

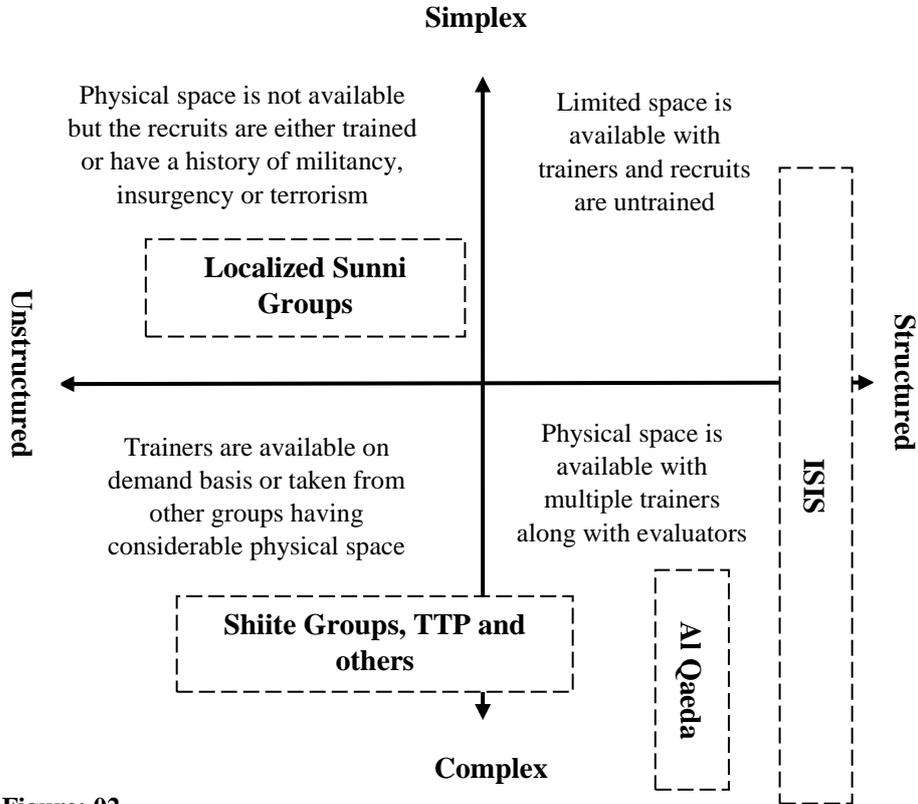


Figure: 02

The graph indicates how fighters belonging to different groups go through a range of training matrix which involves simplex and complex training mechanisms pivoting on structural and non-structural phases. The groups having physical spaces at their disposal engage in structural training courses whereas those devoid of any such luxuries perform simplex training modules and depend upon the expertise, resilience, endurance and knowledge of the recruit instead of following a complex mechanism⁴⁰.

⁴⁰ Four groups have been discussed here on account of their training mode and type and then try to distinguish them from one another. These four groups include *Islamic State in Iraq & Syria* (ISIS), Al Qaeda and its transnational affiliates, localized primary groups like *Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan* (TTP) along with different Shia factions. The last category of such grouping is secondary and tertiary localized organizations. Here a simplex structure

The graph also points structured – un-structured training along x-axis and simple – complex coaching along y – axis respectively. The organizations such as Shiite groups and Al-Qaeda have complex and structural training programs so that accuracy and impact of their operations are guaranteed. Whereas in case of ISIS fighters, the organization employs both complex and simplex training structures depending on the mode and type of ISIS franchise or *Wilaya*. In case of localized groups such as TTP, they attract local recruits who get localized training either on availability of trainers obtained from other affiliated groups or on availability of physical space.

c. Numbers, Assessment and Examination

The exact numbers can only be assessed on basis of the data from Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) who annually document number of individuals intercepted while trying to enter into neighboring countries. The data indicates that number of such persons increase during 2015-17 indicating thereby that during the period a high level of fighters might have tried to cross the border and tried to enter into Afghanistan or Syria through different routes.

The Challenge of Returnees

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) guidelines on foreign fighters are a set of codal formalities which each member state may adhere to and take proportionate action where a member country deems it essential and necessary. These guiding principles are based on the UNSC Resolution 2178 (2014) which endorses rising threat of Foreign Fighters in post ISIS

involves limited or no availability of space along with unimpressive trainers at the disposal of the group. Whereas, a complex format involves readily availability of physical space along with specialized trainers according to their expertise and the training is conducted in a highly secret and clandestine way.

formation period. These guidelines can be divided into three categories including detection and prevention of travel of foreign fighters through or from a member country. Second, strengthening border control measures of a country along with dissemination of advance information to a destination country (if such a travel is by air) as it provides ample reaction time to that country to take action against such an individual. Moreover, regularly share and update intelligence collation with other regional countries. Third, criminalizing and prosecuting the returnees and devise and share successful strategies with other regional countries⁴¹.

In order to evaluate the returnee challenge we have devised a model based on four variables (4Ps) prosecuting, pursuing, penalizing, and parenting. For convenience we have divided these returnees into four categories including those who successfully return and are detected in Pakistan, those who return unnoticed and are not detected, those who are apprehended in the conflict zones and later on returned to Pakistan and those who are intercepted during the course of their quest to join fighting in a theatre of war and are deported in garb of illegal migrants. Each set of fighters has different remedial measures and planning for their physical reintegration and psychological restructuring into the society.

a. Prosecuting

Those who have returned and held up by local Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) should be subjected to prosecution under the local law. If there is a possibility that these fighters can be tried under

⁴¹ “Security Councils Guiding Principles on Foreign Terrorist Fighters: A practical tool for Member States to stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters”, *United Nations Security Council Counter Terrorism Committee*, (United Nations: 2019), 1-3.

International Law then we can hand them over as prisoners of war for imposition of penalty of participating in an international conflict in another country. It is an important step since the act of prosecuting such individuals will certainly deter other people to join rank and file of ISIS or any other groups encouraging youth to become fighters for different purposes.

b. Pursuing

Those who have returned and not detected should be traced out without any further loss of time. Since undetected Foreign Fighters have the ability to develop their own narratives of battlefield experiences so as to reach out and seek attention of the audience in cyber or physical space. Once they gain a high-level attention, they can start conversation with their audiences. Such predominantly unidirectional discourses push these individuals into social excommunication and incarcerate them psychologically and mentally. Such isolation makes the receptive minds to radicalize and make them susceptible to follow the instructions of the returnees. Sometimes these fighters directly approach a person on basis of their observation as they feel that the particular individual or a group of individuals may have the similar penchant or thinking pattern as their own. Such an acquaintance may lead these individuals to isolation and finally they are exposed to verbal instructions and discussions.

Under such situation intelligence-based actions and operations need to be conducted to take out such fighters and penalize them with impunity. Whereas those who voluntarily give up their identity and reveal it to the local authority should be dealt with a degree of

leniency and humaneness.

c. Penalizing

Once a foreign fighter is nabbed at home or abroad and is prosecuted and sentenced, he or she should have an in-prison de-radicalization program and initially such a person should be isolated from other inmates. Once it has been observed by the visiting psychologists that he has normalized mentally and psychologically the individual may be allowed a limited access to other inmates under intense monitoring. We have seen how contagiousness of radicalization spreads like virus among the members of overcrowded prisons. As a result of it, Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Sindh, in 2017, launched a de-radicalization program in prison targeting 300 terrorists incarcerated therein. This initiative not only helped prepared a psychological profile of these fighters but also earmarked psychiatrists of Karachi University and other educational institutions to read them mentally and document them properly⁴².

Those who show good behavior and their mannerism is amenable to social benchmarks may be set free on parole.

d. Parenting

Once such fighters are freed from the prisons or any incarceration, he or she may be placed at a suitable position so that he or she can live his or her live peacefully and without feeling any social stigma attached to him or her on account of the past history. In case a social

⁴² Imtiaz Ali, "CTD plans to de-radicalize around 300 militants held in Sindh's prisons", *Dawn*, January 2, 2017.

positioning cannot be provided to such a fighter, we may provide monthly stipend so that he can sustain himself or herself along with the family members⁴³. Such parenting may assist the erstwhile fighter to regain psychological balance and become a productive citizen of the country.

Conclusion

The foreign fighter phenomenon has many shades and layers. Underneath each shade and every layer there lie two distinct motivational characteristics that borders on financial assistance and personal religiosity. The sectarian and social divides are the two prime motivating factors that have pushed many individuals to undergo training and participate in conflict zones for a larger strategic purpose. A country like Pakistan ill affords to participate in a conflict or take sides in any issue having sectarian undercurrents as it will surely alienate a large segment of sectarian population living in the geographical boundary of the country. Moreover, strengthening of institutions and improving intelligence collection for pre-emptive action-based detection against such individuals or groups are important steps in the right direction.

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⁴³ Mohammad Azeem, "The softer approach", Dawn, March 25, 2013.

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



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