Critical Evaluation of the National Action Plan (NAP)

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Abstract

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

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

Introduction

Pakistan turned a page in its fight against terrorism when the National Action Plan (NAP), a 20-point counter-terrorism framework, was devised
and implemented in the aftermath of the Army Public School (APS), Peshawar attack in December 2014.\(^1\) NAP offered a comprehensive CT and CVE roadmap with the notable exception of de-radicalization and rehabilitation of repentant militants.\(^2\) In spite of this oversight, terrorist attacks have significantly declined across Pakistan over the last several years. Moreover, the command and control systems and infrastructure of various terrorist groups have also largely been dismantled.\(^3\)

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

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

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

Against this backdrop, this article will examine the achievements and challenges of NAP to propose additional measures to plug existing gaps. Rather than writing a point-by-point score card of NAP as done by Zahid (2016) and PIPS (2015), this article will adopt a qualitative-analytical approach to evaluate NAP. It has relied on ten interviews of experts and
policymakers who were involved in formulation or implementation of different aspects of NAP, media reportage, author’s own observations and published secondary sources such as book chapters, journal articles and research reports.

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

**Context and Security Environment when NAP was Created**

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

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

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

12Anup Kaphle, “Pakistan announces a national plan to fight terrorism, says terrorists days are numbered,” *Washington Post*, December 25, 2014,
pressure on Pakistan’s top political and military leadership to bring the perpetrators to justice and eliminate militancy in Pakistan so that such a tragedy does not happen again.

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


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

14 Ibid.


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

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

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

Existing Security Environment in Pakistan

Since January 2015, Pakistan’s political and security environment has evolved significantly, rendering certain points of NAP redundant.\(^{21}\) Similarly, some points such as creating Counter Terrorism Departments (CTDs)\(^{22}\), operationalizing the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) and military courts have been completed or elapsed.\(^{23}\) Still other points, such as border fencing with Afghanistan\(^{24}\), madrassa reforms and countering hate speech are ongoing.\(^{25}\)

Pakistan’s existing militant landscape is a complex and over-crowded space where a plethora of militant groups with similar and opposing ideological...
narratives have respectively cooperated and competed with each other.\textsuperscript{26} Not only terrorism and terrorist groups in Pakistan continuously evolve but at a rapid pace as well. Between 2014 and present, these militant groups have splintered, merged, re-splintered and re-merged.\textsuperscript{27}

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

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.

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

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

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


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


36 Author interview with Farhan Zahid.
these groups to maintain large-scale organizational presence.\textsuperscript{37} The cellular structures hamper the operational capability of these militant groups to carry out large-scale terrorist attacks on mainland Pakistan.\textsuperscript{38}

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

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


\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
parochial focus of the most extremist narratives of the past. Consequently, due to this globalization of extremist narratives in Pakistani militant landscape, events and developments in the Middle East affect behaviors and agenda of terrorist groups in Pakistan.\textsuperscript{44} Particularly, developments in Syria and Iraq have a direct fallout on the sectarian conflict in Pakistan\textsuperscript{45}.

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


\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
Finally, a generational shift has also taken place among the militant groups in Pakistan. Since the 1980s, people from different parts of the world came to Pakistan and Afghanistan for training and participation in militancy. This new generation of Pakistani militants is more violent, tech-savvy, and overly ambitious. Most recruits of this new militant generation are college and university educated youth from middle and upper middle-class segments of urban areas.\textsuperscript{49} This new generation of militants has no past baggage and possesses a qualitatively different worldview from their predecessors. It takes keen interest in developments taking place in Syria and Iraq rather than staying invested only in local and regional conflicts.\textsuperscript{50}

**NAP’s Achievements**

**Decline in Terrorism**

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


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

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

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


57 For details see, Pak Institute for Peace Studies’ Pakistan Security Reports at https://www.pakpips.com/publications#1512730923805-d52fde57-07fa.
As per (Chart 1), 2009 was the most volatile year in Pakistan with 2,586 terrorist attacks accounting for 3,021 killings.\textsuperscript{58} Since then, however, terrorist incidents and casualties have slumped in Pakistan through to 2014. In a span of six years (2008-2014), the number of terrorist attacks halved from 2,148 in 2008\textsuperscript{59} to 1,206 in 2014.\textsuperscript{60} Still, the number of terrorist attacks in 2014 is quite high—3.30 attacks per day.\textsuperscript{61}

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

\textbf{Chart 2: Terrorist Attacks and Casualties in Pakistan (2015-2019)}\textsuperscript{65}

\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{chart2.png}

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


\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{65} For details see, Pak Institute for Peace Studies’ Pakistan Security Reports at https://www.pakpips.com/publications#1512730923805-d52fd857-0f7a.
**National Consensus on CT and CVE**

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

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

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67 Author interview with Farhan Zahid.


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

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

**Institutional Framework for CT and CVE**

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

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73 Author interview with Farhan Zahid.
74 Ibid.
75 Author interview with Tariq Pervez.
institution. However, this warning was ignored resulting in one of the most devastating terrorist attacks in Pakistan’s history.

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

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

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77 Ibid.
79 Author interview with Mohammad Ali Babakhel (Director General, NACTA), May 7, 2020.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
Challenges and Policy Gaps

Evidence-based and Data-driven Approach

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

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

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

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84 Author interview with Ihsan Ghanı.
85 Ibid.
86 Author interview with Adnan Rafiq.
88 Ibid.
89 Author interview with Farhan Zahid.
90 Ibid.
CVE. For instance, developing expertise on how terrorist recruitment, propaganda dissemination and communication takes place on different social media platforms and how this can be countered is one area where attention is required in the near future, especially keeping in view the evolving terrorist landscape and their changing preferences.  

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

**De-radicalization and Rehabilitation**

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

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94 Author interview with Farhan Zahid, Pakistan-based researcher working on terrorism and political violence in South Asia.
phenomenon itself. Everyone is not ideologically motivated, some people take to terrorism due to identity related issues such as search for a sense of belonging and purpose or struggle for recognition.95 Others join out of revenge, anger and frustration against the system. For them, terrorism is a form of catharsis and a power trip. Likewise, some take to militancy for socio-economic reasons, thrill factor or simply peer pressure.96

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

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

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

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

\textit{Non-kinetic CVE Aspects}

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

\textsuperscript{101} Arie W. Kruglanski, Michele Gelfand, and Rohan Gunaratna, “Detainee Deradicalization,” \textit{Association for Psychological Science}, January 2010, \url{https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/detainee-deradicalization}.


\textsuperscript{105} Author interview with Tariq Pervez.

\textsuperscript{106} Author interview with Adnan Rafiq.
networks in Pakistan. However, in the absence of equally effective non-kinetic policy, kinetic measures can lose their efficacy over time.\(^{107}\) Kinetic measures are required to blunt the sharp edge of terrorist threat and buy time and space for non-kinetic interventions to systematically address the underlying structural causes that lead to extremism and terrorism.\(^{108}\)

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

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

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\(^{108}\) Author interview with Dayyab Gillani, assistant professor of political science at Punjab University, May 5, 2020.


\(^{110}\) Author interview with Mohammad Ali Babakhel (Director General, NACTA).

\(^{111}\) Author interview with Sheharyar Kahn, a consultant working with the Ministry of Interior, Pakistan, May 5, 2020.
service delivery and clean image of the government among the populace lie at the heart of creating space and traction for the government-supported narrative challenging extremist ideologies.\textsuperscript{112}

\textit{Revising NAP}

When NAP was formulated, it did not flow from any policy framework despite the fact that work on more than half of the points mentioned in it was already underway.\textsuperscript{113} In future, whenever NAP is reviewed and re-evaluated, it should be given a policy cover to make it more holistic.\textsuperscript{114} Moreover, its focus should be terrorism-specific rather than terrorist-centric. Terrorist actors can evolve and change but the phenomenon of terrorism transcends space and time. Therefore, counter-terrorism reforms and initiatives need to be phenomenon centric as opposed to actor centric.\textsuperscript{115}

After the 18\textsuperscript{th} amendment, most of the points included in NACTA relate to the provinces. Therefore, NACTA should be expanded at the provincial level that will improve implementation and coordination\textsuperscript{116}.

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

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{113} Author interview with Tariq Pervez.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{115} Author interview with Dayyab Gillani.
\textsuperscript{116} Author interview with Mohammad Ali Babakhel (Director General, NACTA).
\textsuperscript{117} Author interview with Ihsan Ghani.
all the points mentioned in NAP are in NISP (2019-2023)\textsuperscript{119}. Either the incumbent government can merge NAP and NISP (2019-2023) and come up with its own policy document or revise the latter in line with current political and security environment.\textsuperscript{120}

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

\section*{Conclusion}

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

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{122} Author interview with Zahid Shahab Ahmed, Research Fellow at Deakin University, Australia, May 4, 2020.
Pakistan’s fight against terrorism and extremism is currently at crossroads. Ensuring continuity of NAP by addressing various redundancies and gaps is urgently needed. It is equally important to enhance the scope of existing non-kinetic measures under NAP. Simultaneously, external factors which have a direct fallout on Pakistan’s internal peace and security should be pursued proactively. Any outcome (positive or negative) of the intra-Afghan peace will have a fallout on Pakistan’s security landscape. So, providing continuous support for the intra-Afghan peace process to bring the Afghan war to a politically negotiated settlement is necessary for amicable resettlement of Afghan refugees and sustainable peace in Pakistan.

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