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

Muhammad Makki, Syed Ali Akash

Abstract:

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

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

Introduction

In order to explain the genesis of terrorism and its subsequent evolution in Pakistan, the existing literature is traditionally clustered around certain recurring themes, such as the emergence of Taliban in Afghanistan and its spillover into Pakistan\(^1\), ethno-religious polarization and identity-based

---

conflict\textsuperscript{2}, systematic re-orientation of the society during the 1980s.\textsuperscript{3} Much of the literature has also well-framed the role of successful operations conducted by Pakistan military in erstwhile FATA which have played an instrumental role in curbing the menace of terrorism in the country — the hard way.\textsuperscript{4}

While acknowledging various counter-terrorism related measures taken by Pakistan, we must also pay attention to the argument that these efforts had been \textit{ad hoc} in nature\textsuperscript{5} and the necessity of formulating actual policies to address the multifaceted terrorism in Pakistan transpired in the later years. Here one may argue that the focus of Pakistan’s counter-terrorism related strategy has been on ‘external’ threats, largely originating from hostile neighbors; thus, undermining the need to compose and implement a comprehensive and robust national ‘internal’ security policy.\textsuperscript{6} Nonetheless, the belated formulations of internal security policies exhibit the state’s


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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Paradigm For Terrorism”. Journal of Conflict Studies 21, no. 2 (August 2001).
New Is the New Terrorism?” Studies in Conflict and Terrorism 27, No. 4 (June 2010): 439-
the New Terrorism and How Dangerous Is It?” Terrorism and Political Violence 13. No.3
(September 2010).
landscape of erstwhile FATA.\(^9\) In this vein, we observed the emergence of various local chapters — such as Panjabi Taliban and Quetta Shura.\(^{10}\) The phenomenon can be understood as the convergence of various pre-existing (violent) ethno-sectarian identities within the broader master identity.\(^{11}\)


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

---


\(^{13}\) NISP 2014, p. 19
Furthermore, the policy was distinctive in its approach towards the concept of security, as it linked the traditionally conceived idea of security to human security [i.e., the security of people of Pakistan]. Within the conceptual debate of human security, NISP (2014) conceived the threat as “serious traditional and non-traditional threats of violent extremism, sectarianism, terrorism, and militancy”.

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

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

---

14 ibid, p. 25
15 ibid, p. 26
17 NISP 2014, p. 19
18 ibid, p. 8-9
19 ibid, p.6-8
terrorism to “promote pluralism, freedom, democracy and a culture of tolerance”.\textsuperscript{20} The policy also raised the significance of a national narrative, curbing terrorist financing and repatriation and/or registration of Afghan refugees. In brief, such considerations pointed towards the adoption of soft measures to \textit{counter} and \textit{prevent} the radicalization and extremism.

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

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

\textsuperscript{20} ibid, p. 13  
\textsuperscript{21} ibid, p. 40  
\textsuperscript{22} Muhammad Feyyaz,“Conceptualizing Terrorism Trend Patterns in Pakistan - an Empirical Perspective.” Perspectives on Terrorism 7, No. 1(February 2013): 73-102.
Concurrently, the *hard* component of the policy was labeled as Composite Deterrence Plan (CDP) and it was focused on capacity building of security forces and development of an anti-terrorist force at the federal level in the form, entitled Rapid Response Force (RRF). While commenting on the CDP and CRP, Farooq and Zaidi stated that CRP was more focused on winning hearts and minds of the people, whereas CDP promoted the vision of National Internal Security Apparatus (NISA)\(^23\); hence, proposing a more *proactive* response than a *reactive* one.\(^24\)

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

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


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

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

**National Action Plan (2014)**

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

---

27 Khosa “Roadmap to Internal Security.”
may effectively respond to the challenge and convert it into an opportunity for structural readjustment."30

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

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

31 International Crisis Group, 2015
33 Babakhel, “Is NAP a Challenge or an Opportunity?”
From Counter-Terrorism to Counter Violent Extremism:

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

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

35 Rumi, Charting Pakistan’s Internal Security Policy
province of Punjab. Resultantly, the institute underlined various capacity-related issues influencing the efficacy of NAP (such as political divide and dysfunctional mechanisms to measure and assess the counter-terrorism effectiveness).38

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

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

From Counter-Terrorism to Counter Violent Extremism: Ban on glorification of terrorists and terrorist organizations through print and electronic media.

Administrative and development reforms in FATA with immediate focus on repatriation of IDPs.

Communication network of terrorists will be dismantled completely.

Measures against abuse of internet and social media for terrorism.

Zero tolerance for militancy in Punjab.

Ongoing operation in Karachi will be taken to its logical end.

Balochistan government to be fully empowered for political reconciliation with complete ownership by all stakeholders.

Dealing firmly with sectarian terrorists.

Formulation of a comprehensive policy to deal with the issue of Afghan refugees, beginning with registration of all refugees.

Revamping and reforming the criminal justice system.

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


On 31 May 2018, the MoI released the National Internal Security Policy NISP 2018-2023 (NISP, 2018 — revised version of NISP 2014). It is important to acknowledge that, NISP (2018) remarkably reflected a consistency in the security policies of Pakistan (Mirza 2018; Waseem
In contrast to NISP (2014), the revised version clearly pronounced the terrorist organizations which were posing threat to the state’s security; “the top threats to Pakistani national security are the Tehrik-i-Taliban, Pakistan (TTP), Islamic State’s (IS) presence in Afghanistan and possible spill-over in Pakistan, return of militants from Syria and Iraq. It was interesting to observe that the policy refused to confine the debate of violent extremism within the religious institutes (i.e., madrassa). Counterintuitively, it highlighted the emerging trend of violent extremism in conventional modern education institutes.

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

---

40 NISP 2018, p. 19-22
conflict-related studies often revolve around unnerving questions about the interplay of identity with violent extremism.\textsuperscript{43} As can be derived from the hinted literature, NISP (2018) provided a comprehensive approach to both prevent and counter violent extremism. Interestingly, the policy contextualized the mentioned theoretical underpinnings while considering “youth alienation and frustration, exclusionary identity narratives, regional inequality, lack of social justice, rule of law and lack of accountability”\textsuperscript{44} as factors which condition violent extremism in Pakistan.

Therefore, NISP (2018) primarily shifted its approach towards soft measures. In order to address the complex challenges related to violent extremism, the policy organized its structure around four main domains\textsuperscript{45}: administrative, ideational, and socio-economic. The administrative domain pointed towards the need for enhancing the capacity of both military and LEA’s to ensure an effective counter-terrorism response. Attention was equally paid to the necessary coordination between different relevant institutions. The ideational domain referred to counter the narrative of violent extremism and bring attention to the role of ‘cyber-space’ which has changed the terrorist recruitment and communication mechanisms. Furthermore, this aspect revealed a commitment towards exposing the extremists’ narratives which have fundamentally created a space within which violent extremism has been accepted by the society. Lastly, it was recognized that socio-economic conditions must be addressed in order to overcome those inequalities which create environment and reason for

\textsuperscript{43} Christopher Dean, “The role of identity in committing acts of violent extremism – and in desisting from them.” Criminal Behavior and Mental Health 27 (October 2017): 281-285.
\textsuperscript{44} NISP 2014, p. 23-26
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, p. 15-17
nourishing and accommodating violent extremism. Another highlighting aspect of the policy was ‘inclusive development’ and its link with the sustainable peace. The policy also included the detailed mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation, while outlining the suggested tasks and timelines for relevant institution.

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

\textsuperscript{46} NISP 2018, p. 9
\textsuperscript{47} ibid
which is fundamentally based on inclusiveness but also (re)produces of a positive image of the country.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

\(^{51}\) NISP, 2018, p. 10
peace in the neighboring countries and the overall region to ensure sustainable peace *within*. It was clearly mentioned that such a meaningful (regional and international) collaboration must be driven by geo-economics rather geopolitics.

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

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

---

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

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


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

for detail summary of policy interventions)\textsuperscript{54}. NCEPG defines extremism as:

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

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


\textsuperscript{55} NCEPG (2018), p. 44-45
violent extremism, however the guidelines have not been given the due attention. Still, measures are needed to be taken to implement its provisions.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Counter Extremism Policy Guideline (NCEPG) 2018</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improve rule of law, governance, and service delivery (at district and Tehsil level), particularly in post conflict areas (including Balochistan, Sindh, and FATA).</td>
<td>Need to create ‘Online Ethical Behavioural Code’ to promote an ethical culture in the digital age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As recommended by the FATA Reforms Report, FATA needs to be mainstreamed and particular attention should be paid to development initiatives.</td>
<td>Envision Madaris as partner in fight against extremism and terrorism. There is greater need to operationalize the mainstreaming of Madaris as a subject of ‘Education Department’ (as underscored in NAP).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial forces shall be strengthened through capacity building. In view, efficient and strategic resource allocation is required at District levels.</td>
<td>Education reforms should promote diversity and inclusiveness in order to minimise (ethno-religious, and Madaris vs. modern education) polarisation. This includes the need for humanisation of curriculum, promoting dialogical exercise and critical thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long term and strategic planning is required to address the regional (socio-economic) inequalities (related to: employment opportunities, skill development, physical infrastructure, education, and health facilities).</td>
<td>Engage in constructive dialogue at education institutes (under the guidance of religious scholars and leaders). The debates/dialogues should be cross-disciplinary in nature (politics, science, human rights, international relations etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve the accountability mechanism to ensure the efficiency of public sector.</td>
<td>Promote ‘cultural education’ at public-private schools and Madaris through strengthening cultural institutions and inter-provincial cultural exchanges. To this end, ‘cultural hubs’ may be established at district or divisional level. This cultural infrastructure shall focus on, promoting visual arts; theatre; historical and archaeological sites; and culture of minorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve the civic-engagement to better understand and assess localised problems, including countering extremist ideologies. To this end, NE CPG proposed the formations of ‘local area committees for peace and welfare’.</td>
<td>Expand the prison reforms to ensure an effective process of prisoners’ reformation, rehabilitation, and reintegration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Improve the role of broadcast media not only to combat terrorism and extremism but also to deconstruct the violent narratives; with reference to Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority Ordinance of 2002’ and ‘NAP’.

Establish a reconciliation policy/strategy through ‘Reconciliation Commissions’ at both provincial and national level. The Commissions may play a role of liaison towards reconciliation process between government/LEAs apparatus and militant groups (such as in Balochistan).


Figure-2: National Counter Extremism Policy Interventions

Conclusion

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

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

\(^{56}\) NISP (2018), p. 10
socio-economic and regional inequalities, madrassas reforms, FATA reforms, deradicalization and rehabilitation, counter-narrative to violent extremism etc. Furthermore, NCEPG (2018) supplemented the country’s drive against violent extremism. The guidelines recognized the role of non-traditional threats (mainly ideologically-driven) associated with violent extremism.

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

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

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