

# **National Narrative to Counter Terrorism in Pakistan: A Critique**

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## **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, *Takfīr*, *Khurūj*, 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.<sup>1</sup> 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 Sayyed Qutb and al-Faraj who believed in the *takfīr* 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-

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<sup>1</sup> Shaih Muslim, *Kitab al-Ammara-wajub Mulazimah Jamat al Muslimeen* -1848; Shaih Bukhari, *Kitab al Fitan: 2, ahkam:4*; Sahih Muslim: *Imarah: 53-6, 58* ;Sahih Muslim-Kitab al Ammara: *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.<sup>2</sup> The world view of jihad was not being informed by al-Zawahiri who belonged to ‘Islamic Jihad’ a splinter group of Muslim Brotherhood.

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<sup>2</sup> For the concept of *takfīr wal hijra*, see, Sayyed Qutb. *Muālim fil tarīq* (Milestones) (New York: Globos 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.

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<sup>3</sup> South Asian Terrorism Portal

Moreover, the militants condemn the constitution of Pakistan for being an instrument of unbelief for affirming the western democratic ideals.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

### ***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

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<sup>4</sup> Al-Zawahiri's monologue titled *Al-Subh wa' Al-Qindil*.

<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

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

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<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> South Asian Terrorism Portal

been converted into the centers of *bida'ā* by the Barelvīs 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.<sup>8</sup>

### ***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 21<sup>st</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup>

### ***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

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup>

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.

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<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> It further provides for severe punishments even the capital punishment.<sup>12</sup> 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.

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<sup>11</sup> 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)

<sup>12</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup> In actuality, it was launched in terms of ‘war of survival’ for Pakistan.<sup>14</sup> A sharp decline in the number of terrorist activities confirm the

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<sup>13</sup> 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)

<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup>

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

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<sup>15</sup> 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)

<sup>16</sup> "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”.<sup>17</sup> 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”.<sup>18</sup>

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.<sup>19</sup> However, those on the other side of the fence advocated for secular character of the state. This debate regarding the

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<sup>17</sup> 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)

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

<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> 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

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<sup>20</sup> 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’.<sup>21</sup>

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-

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<sup>21</sup> 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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