

PAKISTAN'S RESPONSE TO EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM

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Abstract

This article takes a critical view of Pakistan's efforts to deal with the challenges of terrorism and extremism through various legislative and policy initiatives, and the weak links in those efforts, with a view to suggesting measures to rectify the faultlines. Pakistan is geographically located in an area of politico-strategic importance and many significant events of world history have taken place in this region in the last half a century where all major world powers have remained actively involved for their vested interests. Pakistan, due to its geographical contiguity, could not isolate itself from these conflicts and consequently had to pay a heavy price. Despite facing security challenges emanating from multiple factors like ethnic and sectarian differences, socioeconomic disparities and external interferences, Pakistan's response to these challenges has been reactive rather than proactive and futuristic. There have been a number of attempts to reform different areas of the Criminal Justice System and adopt other legislative and policy measures but unfortunately these efforts have resulted in little improvement in the overall efficiency of the system. While kinetic measures to defeat terrorism have been successful, a lot needs to be done in the Common Vulnerabilities and Exposures and de-radicalisation realm. Absence of a well-defined National Security Policy (NSP), overlapping and duplication of efforts and lack of ownership of these initiatives, particularly of those initiated by the previous governments, have further compounded the situation. Apart from other constitutional, legal and administrative instruments, NACTA, NAP and NISP are viable mechanisms through which the problems of security, extremism and terrorism can be addressed. All that is required from our political and military leadership is the will and ownership of these entities and policies.

Key Words: Terrorism, Extremism, Geographically, Politico-strategic, National Security Policy

Introduction

Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, while responding to Margaret Bourke-White in his maiden interview to an American journalist, prophetically asserted with his characteristic clarity and conviction: "Pakistan is the pivot of the world, placed on the frontier on which the future position of the world revolves".¹ Published in the LIFE magazine, January 1948 issue, the Quaid categorically defined Pakistan's prominent place in the world's geo-political dynamism notwithstanding the myriads of problems being endured in the

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initial days.² Unfortunately, even after a lapse of seven decades, Pakistan could not capitalise on its geostrategic position despite being an active participant in all the major politico-strategic events during these years. Historically, Pakistan has more often than not found its geographical location to be a liability and a curse rather than an asset.

Since its inception, Pakistan and the region as a whole have been embroiled in perpetual internal, regional and global conflicts, outright wars, insurgencies and civil wars attracting the negative focus of all major global powers towards the region. The country remained at the centre stage of the global struggle for dominance—first in the Cold War of the 50s and 60s, followed by the Afghan War of the 70s and 80s and then (the still raging) Global War Against Terrorism since the 90s. Few countries in the world have been at the forefront in giving early help to the West in countering the Soviet threat and fighting against extremist ideology and, consequently, remaining entrapped in different conflicts for over six decades.³

The Menace of Terrorism and Extremism

Terrorism, militancy and extremism are, however, not confined to Pakistan or any specific region. Winds of terror have swept all across the region and the world. Some countries around the globe have seen some of the worst terrorist attacks in history where a whole generation has seen nothing but war, destruction and mayhem. Almost all of these conflicts are initially politically motivated and when these issues are not addressed politically, the aggrieved elements resort to violence. If the state response to acts of violence is disproportionate, the conflict may morph into terrorism. Be it inspired by religious or sectarian motives, rightist or leftist ideologies, politico-religious or sub-nationalist agenda, one thing is certain; innocent people have been the target and suffer heavily during this tragic course of events.

Terrorism has seen an extensive and dramatic metamorphosis over the last seven decades. If we compare the Irish Republican Army (IRA), the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), the Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), the Red Army Faction (RAF), the Red Army Brigades, the Japanese Red Army or even the Liberation Tigers of the Tamil Eelam (LTTE) with the recent terrorist movements like Al-Qaida, Taliban and Da'esh, there is a clear distinction in the modus operandi, reach, spread and level of violence. Terrorist organisations

today have become corporate enterprises (as sometimes jokingly called McDaesh). These have franchises all across the globe, flavoured with local modification of their ideology, operational mechanism and objectives. Having an ideological appeal, their reach is almost unlimited. In recent times, their use of latest technology for spreading their ideology, propaganda, recruitment and funding has been unmatched. Attracting and radicalising, both the educated and uneducated youth, have been their biggest success, posing a significant threat to global peace.

The evolution of extremism and terrorism in Pakistan can be divided into three distinct phases. The first phase can be referred to the time just before and after Partition. Even the Quaid wasn't spared and was attacked in his house on July 26, 1943, by Rafiq Sabir Mazangavi. He was able to inflict only minor injuries on his chin and hand. Though not a case of hard-core terrorism, yet it does point to the prevalence of intolerance, extremism and terrorism. Partition and the subsequent exodus left scars of extreme violence and plunder on both emigrating and immigrating masses of people adding further fuel to polarisation in an already volatile society. The assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan too was an act of terrorism. Later events like upheaval in East Pakistan, perennial conflicts and sub-nationalist movements in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa added to the rising exclusivity in Pakistan's society.

The next phase of violence in the country was the result of choice rather than a chance policy decision when Pakistan decided to take up the gauntlet against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan to help the West in turning the tide of the war, and ultimately forcing the Soviet Union to withdraw as a defeated super power.⁴ Pakistan also had to host millions of Afghan refugees, who have been living in the country since then, which has exacerbated law and order and socio-economic problems.⁵

The third phase was characterized by unprecedented violence as the US and its NATO allies toppled the Taliban regime and tried to establish a moderate system in Afghanistan. Despite an early declaration of "Mission Accomplished" by the allied forces, the war is still raging across the country with more and more players still pouring in from around the world to fill in the power vacuum in the vast and ungoverned wilderness of Afghanistan.

These three phases, particularly the third one, created lasting rifts and faultlines within Pakistani society which developed an extremist mind-set which will take time, effort and resources to reverse. The Afghan refugee crisis and the porous border compounded the security situation in Pakistan which was further aggravated by the rise of Violent Non-State Actors (VNSAs). The country had to divert critical and scarce resources away from education, health, infrastructure and economic development during these troubled decades. This exacerbated the frustration among the population as unemployment shot up, development work suffered, economic disparities increased and the population tilted toward further polarisation, intolerance and extremism.

Pakistan's Security Challenges

Pakistan's internal security challenges emanate from multiple factors, which include ethnic/ sectarian differences and socioeconomic or political grievances. Since 2001, more than 18,000 terrorist attacks were perpetrated by various global, regional and local terrorist organizations killing thousands of Pakistanis.⁶ Alongside the religiously motivated terrorist acts, activities of foreign sponsored sub-nationalist groups particularly in Balochistan and Sind are of serious concern. Associated problems aggravating internal security include the presence of Afghan refugees, proscribed organizations, capacity issues of Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs), weaknesses and inefficiency of the criminal justice system and overall poor socio-economic indicators of the country.

Pakistan's Response to Terrorism and Extremism

Pakistan has shown extraordinary courage and resilience in its fight against terrorism in the recent past. As compared to 2010, there has been a significant decline in the number of terrorist attacks in the country, highlighting improvement in internal security situation. The downward trend in the number of terrorist attacks as compared to the previous years can be attributed to a hybrid mix of kinetic and non-kinetic state response. Swaths of areas, earlier under the control of militants in the (erstwhile) Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have been reclaimed and peace has been restored to a large extent.

As stated earlier, terrorism has not been a new phenomenon in Pakistan. The country has been taking measures from time to time to counter the menace of terrorism. A number of legislations and policies were enacted in this regard.

Laws in Pakistan have also evolved over the recent decades to counter the threat of extremism and terrorism. Since 1975, successive governments in Pakistan, both civil and military, have legislated and enacted a number of Acts and Ordinances, amendments and counter-terrorism laws along with other specialized measures to counter the growing threats emanating from a plethora of terrorist organizations.

Counter terrorism laws are special laws enacted for prosecuting terrorists, their financiers and sponsors. The *raison d'être* of such legislative measures is to fast track the procedure of due process keeping in view the peculiar nature of the crime. Counter terrorism laws in Pakistan could be divided into two broad categories: those enacted for the specific purpose to try and prosecute individuals involved in acts of terrorism and those enacted for individuals involved in planning, sponsoring and financing terrorist activities and supporting terrorist organisations. Some of the details of such enactments are:-

a. **Pakistan Penal Code 1860**

Terrorist related crimes were dealt under the provisions of Pakistan Penal Code 1860 (PPC) which contained offences of waging/ attempt to wage or abetment of waging war against Pakistan (Section 121 PPC), collection of arms, etc. with the intention of waging war (Section 122 PPC), assaulting President, Governor etc. (Section 124 PPC), Sedition (Section 124-APP) and Mutiny (Section 131 PPC, High jacking (Section 402-B and C of PPC and Mischief (Section 436-PPC).⁷ These sections of law still form part of the Pakistan Penal Code. It was amended in 2018.

b. **Suppression of Terrorist Activities (Special Courts) Acts (1974 to 1997)**

History of special legislation regarding terrorism in Pakistan starts with the legislation of Suppression of Terrorist Activities (Special Courts) Act 1974. Thereafter, Special Courts for Speedy Trial Ordinance 1987, Terrorist Affected Areas (Special Courts) Ordinance 1990, Special Courts for Speedy Trials Ordinance 1991 and Special Courts for Speedy Trials Act 1992 were enacted.

c. **The Anti-Terrorist Act 1997 and Amendments**

The Anti-Terrorism Act 1997 (ATA) is the primary substantive law that governs counter-terrorism measures in Pakistan. At the time of its

enactment, the country was in the grip of sectarian terrorism. Law Enforcement Agencies and courts were finding it difficult to arrest, investigate and convict hard core terrorists. Being a Special Law, ATA 1997 has overriding effect on other general laws.⁸ A fundamental flaw within the ATA is the vague and overly broad definition of “terrorism” under its provisions. This allows offences, including heinous crimes, bearing no nexus to militancy and proscribed terrorist networks to be tried under its provisions. Anti-Terrorism Courts were thus burdened beyond their capacity. Most recently the Supreme Court of Pakistan has formulated a committee, comprising supreme court judges, to assess and review the definitional problems in the Act and submit its report.

d. **Special Courts and Protection of Judges and Witnesses**

For the trial of offences under Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997 and other terrorism-related offences, Special Courts were established under Section 13 of the Act as “Anti-Terrorism Court”. The courts were empowered, subject to the availability of resources, to make such necessary orders and take such measures, as it deems fit, for the protection of witnesses, judges, public prosecutors, counsels and other persons concerned in the proceedings.⁹

e. **Anti-Money Laundering Act, 2010**

This Act was enacted for the prevention of money laundering, combating financing of terrorism and forfeiture of property derived from, or involved in money laundering or financing of terrorism or for matters connected thereto.

f. **Counter Insurgency (In Aid of Civil Power) Regulation 2011**

This regulation was specifically meant to curb the menace of terrorism especially in areas of (erstwhile) FATA and PATA (Provincially Administered Tribal Areas) where the armed forces were called in aid of civil administration. This regulation also provides mechanism for keeping the suspects in custody as internees.

g. **The Investigation for Fair Trial Act, 2013**

It was enacted to prevent the law enforcement and intelligence agencies from using their powers arbitrarily and also to provide for their permissible and fair uses in accordance with law. Rules were framed under this Act.

h. **Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Ordinance, VIII of 2013**

This ordinance was promulgated to ensure compliance of FATF (Financial Action Task Force) recommendations, to counter terrorism financing and allowing for taking action against properties/assets of proscribed organisations involved in the terrorist activities.

i. **Protection of Pakistan Ordinance, 2013**

This ordinance was enacted to provide for protection against waging of war and prevention of acts threatening the security of Pakistan and also for the speedy trial of offences falling in the schedule annexed with this Ordinance. Rules have been framed under this act.

j. **Protection of Pakistan (Amendment) Ordinance, 2014**

This ordinance was promulgated to introduce the concept of enemy combatants and addressing the issues of missing persons. Under the constitutional limits, it gives authority to LEAs to detain suspects for a longer period of time.

In addition to the above laws, there have been a number of attempts to reform different areas of the criminal justice system (Police, Prosecution, Judiciary and Prisons). However, these reforms unfortunately have failed to bring about desired improvement in the overall efficiency of the system. Looking at the multitude of legislations and policies enacted and formulated in its short history, extremism and terrorism should never have taken roots, let alone flourish in Pakistan. A thorough examination is needed to see why these policies have not yielded the desired results, not just for introspection but more importantly to plug the holes in the system for making it more responsive, efficient and effective in the future.

Analysis

Pakistan's response to extremism, terrorism and outright threats to security has mostly remained reactive as policies were typically half-baked, lacking ownership. A perfect example of apathy and lack of ownership is the office of National Security Advisor (NSA), created in March 1969.¹⁰ There have been seven NSAs since then, with only two civilians.¹¹ Of the 50 years of its existence, the office has remained "headless" for 31 years.¹² The last NSA resigned in June 2018¹³ and the office is vacant since then. We have to understand that only rhetoric and political point-scoring, devoid of sincerity of intent and earnest efforts for implementation, would take us nowhere.

Among the many impediments in formulation and implementation of CVE/CT policies in Pakistan, two challenges stand out-absence of parliament from the process of policy formulation and lack of parliamentary or civilian oversight, and ambiguity in policy and operational framework.¹⁴

Across the board political leadership was made a part of the NAP (National Action Plan) formulation but then parliament was almost excluded (apparently by design) from its implementation or oversight mechanism. Even the two National Internal Security Polices (NISPs) had no participation from the parliament.¹⁵ The parliament itself hardly made any serious attempt to initiate a debate on critical policy formulation to provide an insight into national security. For a parliamentary democracy, parliament is the supreme constitutional and legislative body. Keeping it out of critical policy discussion does not augur well for legitimacy and ownership. Recently, as per media reports, Speaker of the National Assembly has decided that he will himself head the National Assembly standing committee on internal security and would ask for a fortnightly report on NAP. Outcome of the decision is still awaited.¹⁶

Parliament has had little input even in the case of status of banned organisations, a perennial thorny issue that is the focus of national and international concern.¹⁷ Here too, civil and military bureaucracy has been dealing with the issue. From the recent deliberations on mainstreaming proscribed militant organisations, it appears that the parliament will have little influence or input and will be conveniently kept out of the loop. For a sustainable solution to the myriad security concerns, only parliament through their collective wisdom, should take major decisions and should decide the fate of banned organisations, especially those conceived by the world as state proxies.¹⁸

The second major problem concerns the implementation and monitoring mechanism as in the case of the National Action Plan. As deliberated upon in the latter part, so far, nobody is ready to take ownership of NAP. Multiple authorities are supposed to be responsible for its implementation and monitoring. Parliamentary oversight can address this issue.¹⁹

Despite facing serious security issues from its birth, Pakistan doesn't even have a comprehensive National Security Policy (NSP).²⁰ A few impulsive attempts were made to develop NSP but these attempts lacked seriousness on

part of the government. The fact is that all other security policies, (including internal, food, water, counter terrorism, counter violent extremism, education, health, job, environment, etc.) flow out of the National Security Policy.²¹ In the absence of such a document, all security policies are prepared and implemented (if at all) in silos with little or no horizontal or vertical links. At times, these unconnected policies tend to overlap and duplicate each other, causing wastage of resources and even turf wars. For example, NACTA is mandated by section 4(a) of its Act *“to receive and collate data or information, or intelligence and disseminate and coordinate between all relevant stakeholders to formulate threat assessments with periodical reviews to be presented to the Federal Government for making adequate and timely efforts to counter terrorism and extremism;”*²². On 8th March 2019, a National Intelligence Committee (NIC) was formed, through a Ministry of Interior notification. NIC is headed by Secretary Interior with DG Intelligence Bureau (IB), DG Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), representative of Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), Military Operations Directorate, all provincial heads of police and heads of Counter Terrorism Departments (CTDs) as its members. Surprisingly, National Coordinator (NC) NACTA is not a member of this committee. With a Joint Intelligence Directorate (JID) already functioning at NACTA, the logic of another Committee is incomprehensible.

Pakistan's National Security Policy (NSP) clearly defines these ambiguities, turfs and relevance. It goes without saying that NSP must be citizen-focused and not driven by politics; it should look into the future and should not be confined to the government's tenure in office; it should be proactive and not determined by impulse. A silver lining started appearing, at least in the legislative realm, in Pakistan's approach towards extremism and terrorism around 2013 when the state embarked upon some proactive measures. Among the first of such steps was passing of the National Counter Terrorism Authority Act (NACTA), legislated in March 2013. This was closely followed by formulation of Pakistan's first National Internal Security Policy (NISP 2014-18) in April 2014.²³ This again was a proactive initiative, though the formulation process and implementation mechanism were both flawed. It was prepared in isolation without first identifying and then holding multiple consultative sessions with relevant stakeholders for their input and creating buy-ins. That was one of the many reasons why the provinces neither owned nor made any efforts to implement the policy. Ministry of Interior and NACTA were tasked to implement NISP.²⁴

The tragic incident of Army Public School, Peshawar, in December 2014, necessitated formulation of National Action Plan (NAP) to revisit the efforts of eradicating extremism and terrorism from the country.²⁵ NAP was again a reactive plan, prepared in haste.²⁶ The actual formulation was done by a group of experts in one day and the implementation mechanism was never worked out.

In 2018, NACTA and Ministry of Interior initiated work on National Internal Security Policy 2018-23. The formulation process was organised in a manner to have maximum input from diverse stakeholders. It started with a critical appraisal of NISP 2014-18, new and emerging challenges and how best to deal with these issues. NISP 2018-23 was approved by the then-government in the last cabinet meeting on the last day (31st May 2018) in office.

As has been the case with many legislative and policy initiatives, both NISP (2014-18), NAP and most of the CVE and CT policies had serious issues. I would specifically discuss NACTA, NISP, NAP and, National Counter Extremism Policy Guidelines (NCEPG); the argument would hold good for more or less all Pakistan's legislative and policy initiatives.

While kinetic measures to defeat terrorism have been successful and through these measures, the state has been able to recapture areas, a lot needs to be done in the CVE and de-radicalisation realm. Realising the importance of CVE, NACTA embarked upon formulation of National Counter Extremism Policy Guidelines (NCEPG) in early 2016. Over three hundred diverse stakeholders were consulted in over thirty sessions. A Steering Committee, headed by Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed, then deliberated upon the recommendations of the consultative sessions.²⁷ A sub-committee, led by Mr. Shakeel Durrani, then translated these recommendations into a policy document. NCEPG, a very comprehensive document, was approved by the Minister for Interior.²⁸ It has the following pillars:

- a. **Building Community Resilience.** A relatively inexpensive strategy with lasting effects, wherein, the community will develop innate, reckoned and shared resilience against extremism.
- b. **Media Engagement.** It includes print, electronic and social media and aims to assess the magnitude of problem, tools of dissemination and study the logic of appeal to certain groups.

- c. **Cultural Revival.** It encompasses therapeutic, non-verbal and non-confrontational communication with self, others, past, present and future in correctional settings to address issues in unconscious mind that might not find redress otherwise and help in smooth reintegration into society.
- d. **Integrated Education Reforms.** These are closely related to *madaris* reforms but extend to include contemporary education, hate speech, *inter alia*.
- e. **Rehabilitation and Reintegration.** It is a two-way strategy aimed at preparing community to accept the former extremists, reforming and reintegrating them back into the society.
- f. **Enabling Environment.** It aims at erosion and ultimate loss of faith in militant ideology, utility of violence, stature of the terrorist leaders, and narrative through presentation of alternative points of views and ways and projecting reality of victim's pain.

The need for a civilian body to effectively deal with the menace of extremism and terrorism has always been felt to implement the policy measures initiated only recently though concrete and practical steps. In 2008, through an executive order, the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) was established as an attached department of the Ministry of Interior. This was the first proactive step to eradicate extremism and terrorism. The first five years (2008-13), were unfortunately wasted in turf war between the Prime Minister Office, the Minister for Interior and the head of the Authority. As a result, NACTA became the parking place for senior police officers. These issues were resolved when the NACTA Act was passed by the Parliament in March 2013, just as the PPP government was completing its term in office. The Act placed NACTA directly under the Prime Minister.

The new arrangements, however, proved to be short-lived as through an administrative notification NACTA was again placed under the Ministry of Interior for "Administrative" purposes while it was still to be answerable to the Prime Minister for its "professional and operational" activities— a classic case of neither here nor there. These arrangements remained in vogue despite Islamabad High Court's verdict terming the notification "null and void".²⁹

No Board of Governors (BoG) meeting, mandated by the Act, was convened for the entire five years of PML-N government. The Prime Minister had no

desire to own NACTA. The present regime too, despite starting on a positive note by holding the first ever BoG meeting, has de-facto neglected the Authority.³⁰ There is no clarity on the future, future role and objectives of the Authority. It would be unfortunate if the neglect continues like that.

Story of the NISP (2014-18) is not much different. This was another proactive and a much-needed policy and was formulated by the Interior Ministry. Despite having serious formulation, implementation, monitoring and oversight issues, it was the first-ever Internal Security Policy of the country. The Ministry of Interior and NACTA were to be the implementation agencies. Approved by the Federal cabinet in April 2014, it failed to effectively take off as no one bothered seriously to put it on track, find remedies for its inherent weaknesses and earnestly pursue its implementation. NACTA has been facing severe resource constraints right from its inception until to date. For example, at the very outset, it was given the gigantic task of dialogue with militants, rehabilitation of hundreds of thousands of temporarily displaced persons and rehabilitation of the devastation caused by the ten years of terrorism but was allotted only half a dozen officers on its strength.

National Action Plan, coming on the heels of NISP, was formulated in December 2014 after the Army Public School incident. At the federal level, 16 subcommittees were notified by the Prime Minister's Office for its implementation. The Interior Minister, who headed 12 of these subcommittees, was designated by the Prime Minister for implementation oversight. These subcommittees have met only once, in the first week of the notification. In August 2016, the National Security Advisor was tasked to head the implementation Task Force. In August 2017, one of the additional secretaries in the Ministry of Interior was given the arduous duty of NAP implementation.³¹ Monitoring, data collection and reporting kept swinging between NACTA, National Police Bureau and Ministry of Interior. The Prime Minister hardly convened any NAP meeting, showed any concerns about its implementation or held any individual, provincial or federal entity accountable for its slow pace of work. It appears that after formulation, NAP was put on autopilot to run its course.

NISP 2018-23 encountered ownership problems from the very first day of its approval as it was approved by the previous regime in its last cabinet meeting on its last day in office. Its formulation had more to do with political point

scoring than actually addressing core internal security issues. Through its hasty adoption by the federal cabinet, its stillborn status was ensured by the very government that conceived it and took the trouble of its long formulation process. The change of regime in 2018 may further deteriorate the situation as the present government is headed by a Prime Minister whose dislike for the previous regime is no secret. Since its approval, except for a little attention by some international entities, there has been no mention of NISP in any governmental circles.

The foregoing was a cursory look at the legislative side of Pakistan's efforts to counter terrorism and counter violent extremism from the country. Media, think tanks, experts, Senate, the National Assembly and the military leadership have been lamenting the slow pace of these struggles but the successive governments, except for lip service or political rhetoric, have done nothing to take ownership. From the conduct of successive governments, it appears as if political leadership has outsourced Pakistan's CT and CVE efforts to the military establishment and has absolved itself of this responsibility, creating doubts about the capacity and reliability of civilian institutions to deal with challenge. There is no clear demarcation of power, responsibility and resource sharing with the military institution in these policies. Instead of taking ownership and being a guiding policy making entity, an easy way out adopted by the governments so far has been taking refuge in more and more legislation and creating new CT/CVE entities, committees and subcommittees.

Statistics from internal as well as external trends clearly display that the monster of terrorism especially extremism has not been completely subdued. Although incidents of violence in the country have reduced as a result of the active measures taken by the security forces in recent years, prevalence of intolerance and extremist ideology still continues unabated. Recent terrorist attacks in various parts of Pakistan endorse this observation. These attacks do point towards the fact that radicalisation among Pakistani youth has not subsidised yet. Such radicalisation may not always manifest itself violently, but it does present a sombre potential future indicator. If our society and indeed the youth continues to be dominated by this steady spread of violence, we need to work towards broader and long-term approaches to stemming violent extremism and radicalisation.

At the international front as well, the menace of terrorism is not over; Al-Qaida may be enervated but it is still alive in parts of the world and reviving itself; Daésh may have been routed in Iraq and Syria but recent attacks around the world and more recently in Sri Lanka have proved that it is still a potent threat to world peace; Afghan Taliban have proved that they are a very serious future contender for Afghanistan leadership. In Pakistan itself, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) may be on the run but attacks in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa do imply that the threat is not over yet. Similarly, proscribed militant organisations across the country may be hibernating with their intact infrastructure and networks waiting for an opportune time to jump back into the fray. The state of Pakistan and indeed the world at large must not become complacent; rather they should adopt provocative policies to outwit and outrun them.

Keeping aforementioned narrative in mind, there is a dire need that the leadership in Pakistan and its law enforcement agencies must own, implement and review its CVE/CT policies. NAP, NISP and other securities policies need serious review in order to rectify the fault lines and cater for any reservations from any quarters before a sincere effort for its implementation.

Formulation of National Security Policies

National security is not a constant but is defined by a multitude of challenges, both external and internal. National Security Policy, should therefore be dynamic and evolve with the emerging challenges. Apart from the traditional security concerns, innovative issues such as terrorist financing, money laundering, increased use of technology by criminals, militants and terrorists, cyber-related issues need to be addressed through these policies. While taking these important steps, the following points about formulation, implementation and monitoring should be kept in mind:

- a. Formulations process should start from preparation of a draft policy document or agenda building.
- b. Identification of diverse national (and depending on the nature of the policy, regional as well as global) stakeholders should be the next step. Attempts should also be made to bring negative stakeholders on-board too.

- c. This should be followed by exhaustive consultations with them to seek their input on feasibility, ground realities, cultural and social sensitivities and to create ownership and buy-in for the policy. Stakeholders' input should be incorporated into the final policy.
- d. The final product should have ownership of all relevant stakeholders and should be as close to the ground realities as possible. This will make implementation easier and smoother. Policy should clearly indicate the desired outcomes, milestones and (practical) datelines.
- e. Final policy document would then go through the process of adoption. If it involves enactment of legislation, Parliament would come in the loop. NACTA Act, NISP (2014-18) and NAP did not follow this process whereas in cases of NCEPG and NISP (2018-23) the process was followed.

Implementation and Monitoring of Policies

Implementation is the fundamental part of any policy and as such should form part of the original policy document. Policy document should not only have the “what” part but should have a “how” part as well. Implementation is carried out by institutions other than those who formulated and adopted the policy. A statute generally defines the broad outlines of the policy. Implementation agency should be clearly designated and its horizontal and vertical linkages within the agency and with other federal and provincial entities be unmistakably defined.

Implementation should be monitored for assessing effectiveness of the policy and formative evaluation to be carried out and corrections made, if required, to determine how well a policy is working. People inside and outside the government typically use cost-benefit analysis to try to find the answer. In other words, if the government is spending billions of rupees on a particular policy, are the benefits derived from it worth the expenditure? Cost-benefit analysis is based on hard-to-come-by data that are subject to different, and sometimes contradictory, interpretations. There are also issues of tangible and intangible fruits accrued from a policy. It may not be possible to evaluate benefits of, say a CVE policy, as the results may not be tangible or even available for a specific timeframe.

There is also the issue of termination of a particular policy, which again is not an easy task. Policies are terminated because they become obsolete, clearly do not work, or lose their support among the interest groups and elected officials that placed it on the agenda in the first place. In Pakistan, at times policies die their own slow death when they are not implemented.

Generally, different agencies should be designated to implement and monitor policies. Monitoring also helps in holding individuals and organisations involved in implementation accountable for their inaction and even for capacity building of implementing entities. Civil society organisations may also be made part of the monitoring mechanism, if nature of the policy so permits.

To effectively formulate, implement and monitor security, CVE/CT policies, both political and military institutions have to work together. They need to develop multidimensional and adaptable strategies, bringing all segments of policy making together. Parliament is the most suitable forum for this endeavour. Parliament can take ownership of CVE, CT, security efforts and even NACTA functioning and oversight through the parliamentary committee on national security and interior.

Way Forward

As a way forward, the following recommendations are proposed:

- a. Government must appoint a National Security Advisor with a good understanding of internal and external security issues forthwith. Input from the military establishment may be solicited but the person should be a civilian so that he or she can give the civilian perspective on security issues. Without strong leadership, the NAP and NISP and other security initiatives cannot go far.
- b. NACTA should be put under the Prime Minister's office right away and the impugned notification of Ministry of Interior, issued in 2014 of placing it under the Ministry of Interior should be withdrawn. As a strengthened, revived and empowered federal counterterrorism authority, it should be revitalized to frame and recommend policies for CVE, CT, and de-radicalisation. NACTA's Joint Intelligence Directorate (JID) should be made operational. JID is an excellent hybrid model where it is headed by a serving

Major General as Member NACTA with a serving one-star (from Navy or Air Force) under a civilian National Coordinator. Other (almost 400 strong) personnel too come from Pakistan Armed Forces, police, IB, private sector and fresh recruits from the market.

- c. Our youth is our real asset; their engagement in national reconstruction has to go far beyond rhetoric. At the same time, when we talk of youth, we generally limit ourselves to the youth in our schools, colleges and universities. We have to understand that this segment of youth is easily accessible, has a social (and generally a financial) security net. We have to focus (more and not less) on the youth that is not educated, have no jobs or prospects of a job, works on daily wages, in workshops, teashops or on the streets, are generally inaccessible and are vulnerable to negative influences and violence.
- d. In Pakistan, security, law & order and terrorism are provincial subjects and provinces are autonomous in pursuing their own policies depending on their peculiar imperatives. As such, federal policies must keep provincial imperatives and sensitivities in mind while formulating policies. Policies formulated without provincial buy-in are not implementable. Provinces and even regions have varying nature of security issues and terrorism triggers. Situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has more to do with ideological terrorism; Balochistan has sub-nationalism and sectarian issues to counter while linguistic and ethnic issues-related violence is a challenge for the Sind government.

For these and other similar recommendations and suggestions to become reality, the current level of polarisation within the society, the parliament, the political groups and among the different institutions of the state must be downplayed instead of escalating further.

Apart from the numerous constitutional, legal, administrative instruments available to the state, NACTA, NAP and NISP are viable mechanisms through which the problems of security, extremism and terrorism can be addressed. All

that is required from our political and military leadership is the will and ownership of these entities and policies.

Endnotes

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