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Editor's note

This is the fifth biannual issue of *Conflict and Peace Studies*, a flagship publication of Pak Institute for Peace Studies. Until 2012, the journal has regularly been published as a quarterly research journal. Started in the last quarter of 2008, as many as 21 issues of the PIPS research journal have been published so far with their primary focus on conflict, insecurity, militancy and militants' media, religious extremism, radicalization & de-radicalization, terrorism & counterterrorism, human rights and regional strategic issues.

The journal has been well received by academic and research quarters. Besides adding to existing knowledge, it has been contributing to increase understanding among policymakers, and regional and multilateral institutions about situation-specific needs, early warnings, and effective options or strategies to prevent/de-escalate conflict and risk of violence in Pakistan and the region.

PIPS is thankful to Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre (NOREF) for continuing its support for the publication of *Conflict and Peace Studies* for the second year in a row. In 2014, too, PIPS had sought collaboration with and financial assistance from NOREF to publish two biannual issues of the journal. This joint PIPS-NOREF publication is meant to achieve the following objectives:

- To produce and publish context-specific research work on subjects of conflict, religious extremism, violent radicalism, militancy and terrorism, etc., in local and regional perspectives and disseminate to analysts, research institutes, institutions of higher education, policymakers, media and civil society organizations and others;
- To enhance the empirical knowledge-base and scholarship on interstate and intrastate conflicts and viable options of achieving peace, security and stability in the South Asian region, with particular focus on Pakistan;
- To increase understanding among policymakers and regional and multilateral institutions about situation-specific needs, early warnings, and effective options or strategies to prevent/de-escalate conflict and risk of violence; and
- To improve the effectiveness of local, regional and international partners by strengthening the evidence base and conceptual

foundation for engaging in conflict prevention and de-escalation interventions in Pakistan.

Muhammad Amir Rana

Comprehensive review of National Action Plan

Executive summary

Ever since NAP has been launched, there has been decline in violence in the country. This decline needs to be sustained by simultaneously addressing the much deeper issues, going beyond the militaristic quick fixes. Without addressing those issues, the fear of return to violence lurks behind.

It was in late December 2014 that the Prime Minister, Mr. Nawaz Sharif, responding to the dastardly attack on a school in Peshawar week earlier, rolled out its counter-terror strategy, National Action Plan. What is unique about the NAP is that it galvanized all political parties and military leadership to publicly vow against terrorism, besides bringing out government's counter-militancy efforts in the public debate.

Since then, if gone by the number, there has been a decline in terrorist attacks in the country: According to statistics provided by Pak Institute for Peace Studies' digital database on security, from January 1 to August 31 this year, a total of 471 terrorist attacks took place across Pakistan, which represented a 47 percent decrease from such attacks recorded during the corresponding period of 2014. The number of people killed (752) and injured (931) also posted a decrease of 36 percent and 43 percent, respectively, from corresponding months of previous year. Government claims its efforts have brought down terrorism in the country by 70 percent.¹

While NAP has apparently taken on some issues hitherto ignored in Pakistan's counter-terror approach, much of it is continuation and expansion of the old counter-terror strategies. For one, it would be wrong to say that the government "woke up" only after the APS attack; operation Zarb-e-Azb in North Waziristan was launched in June 2014, much before NAP, followed by military operations Khyber 1 & 2 in Khyber Agency the same year. Meanwhile surgical strikes against militants in Karachi have been going on since 2013. By the same token, loopholes in the performance on the NAP, nine months later, appear somewhat similar to the pre-NAP confusion in dealing with militants.

Several observers point out that the country's National Action Plan is too much military-centric, squeezing the space of the civilians.² They argue that military

¹ Tim Craig, "In Pakistan, a prime minister and a country rebound — at least for now", *The Washington Post*, September 8, 2015.

² This point is made by some experts. Also see, a report by International Crisis Group: "Revisiting Counter-terrorism Strategies in Pakistan: Opportunities and Pitfalls", *International Crisis Group*, Asia Report N°271, July 2015,

holds the key role in apex committees which steer the NAP implementation. Some political parties have also expressed serious concerns that the paramilitary troops Rangers have overstepped their mandate in Karachi.

Others however believe that while military campaign against terrorists remains at the heart of NAP, government has failed to take some effective steps to reduce appeal of religious extremism and violent ideologies that feed terrorism. In the most recent National Apex Committee meeting held in Islamabad, on September 10, Prime Minister expressed dissatisfaction over the implementation of NAP and directed the federation and provinces to improve coordination so as to produce better results.³

Below are key findings from the expert analyses this report contains on the progress on each of the twenty points of NAP.

1. There is no direct relation between the decline in terror attacks and **resumption of death penalty**. According to the database of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, out of the 195 people executed from December 19 to July 31, only 22 were terrorists; the remaining 173 were common criminals.⁴
2. The details of the proceeding of the **military courts**, established after behind-the-scene debate and dissent, meant to try “jet black terrorists”, are shrouded in secrecy, besides marking a dark spot on the country’s nascent democracy.
3. Although the country has been vowing **to take action against all sorts of armed groups**, including those attacking across the border, the government’s subsequent action and statements suggest lack of clarity on dealing with certain groups.
4. Confusion continues to mar the **functioning of NACTA**, the country’s central counter-terror body: does it fall under the Prime Minister or Interior Minister? Without any board meeting held so far, the organization’s staff lack strategic guidance and its head remain powerless. It has yet to get

<http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/pakistan/271-revisiting-counter-terrorism-strategies-in-pakistan-opportunities-and-pitfalls.aspx>

³ "NAP success a collective responsibility: Nawaz Sharif", *The Nation*, September 11, 2015

⁴ "Militants in minority in Pakistan execution drive, deterrent effect debated," *Reuters*, July 26, 2015; also see: hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/who-has-been-executed.

budget, despite recently made claims by interior minister of releasing it soon.⁵

5. The country's existing laws are sufficient in **cracking down on hate speech**, provided law-enforcement agencies are trained and equipped to do that. Instead of having any national counter-hate strategy, the government has opted to regulate "public order" and check "systemic" dissemination of hate material.
6. There has been zero conviction in **terror financing**, a subject that stays untouched because of the government's lack of understanding of the web of militant economy. Even estimates about terror financing are unclear.
7. Without the release of the list of banned outfits in public, it is questionable how the government can stop **emergence of banned outfits**. While the government insists that it has arrested supporters of banned outfits and recovered their material, much of the action was restricted to first few months. Banned groups, despite arrests of their leaders, still carry out public meetings and protest demonstrations.⁶
8. While all police departments in the four provinces have their own specialized forces, they lack coordination, and budget is yet to be released for the much-needed **federal counter-terrorism force**.
9. Action against sectarian militants will create positive atmosphere for religious minorities, but the presence of sectarian mindset, supported by discriminatory laws, still hangs above, creating fears of **religious persecution**.
10. The government has lately taken action against **religious seminaries**, such as by geo-tagging them and asking them to register afresh. The moves, however, largely faced resistance from some religious educational boards and clergy; lately, it was decided in meeting of the country's political and military leaders with representatives of madrasa educational boards to

⁵ On September 10, 2015, Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar said that the government has committed funding for NACTA. See, "Those challenging writ of state to be crushed: Nisar", *Samaa Web Desk*, September 10, 2015, <http://www.samaa.tv/pakistan/2015/09/those-challenging-writ-of-state-to-be-crushed-nisar/>

⁶ "ASWJ ends protest in Islamabad as police assures to probe workers killings," *Express Tribune*, March 6, 2015.

form a committee for preparing forms to register madrassas and to evolve a mechanism for register madrassa accounts.⁷

11. Only Punjab has issued a statute **banning glorification of terrorists**, on media. Yet, several militant outfits continue to publish and post material online.
12. Although the government claims to have restored security in parts of **FATA**, nothing practical is done to introduce the long-demanded **administrative reforms**. The counter-militant approach in FATA has been too military-centric, ignoring the fruits of mainstreaming the area.
13. The government claims to have **dismantled terrorist networks**, several of which operated from North Waziristan. Independent observers argue although terrorist networks have been weakened and their capacity to operate hampered but they are not completely dismantled.
14. The government's plan of introducing cyber-crime bill to **monitor internet for terrorist activities**, inflict several restrictions on the regular users, and violators, of the internet. Civil society fears that any such law could be misused in the name of terrorism, not least because there is no comprehensive personal data protection mechanism.
15. That the Prime Minister vowed to end **militancy from Punjab**, to many, showed the government's admission of the presence of militants in Punjab. Questions are asked as to whether the government will ever take on all outfits.
16. Publicly, the **operation in Karachi** has lately been focusing on targeting political players of the town. There are also clear signs that the operation has effectively reduced terrorist attacks and criminal activities in the metropolis. Prime Minister Sharif has frequently deflected political opposition to the operation, saying that it will continue till its logical end.⁸
17. Although NAP calls for the empowering **Balochistan government to pursue reconciliation** policy with the disgruntled Baloch, heavy-handed

⁷ This was announced by Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar, a day after madrassa representatives met PM and Army Chief. Nisar claimed that the two sides agreed on taking forward madrassa reforms. See: Mian Abrar, "With army chief on table, PM brings clergy on board", *Pakistan Today*, September 8, 2015.

⁸ "Karachi operation will be accomplished at all costs: PM Nawaz", *Express Tribune*, September 11, 2015.

measures of dealing in Balochistan continue to trickle in the media. To some Baloch nationalists, the approaches are poles apart. The apparent decline in sectarian attacks in Balochistan is owned to provincial and national developments against sectarian groups and their leaders.

18. The government's approach in dealing with **sectarian terrorists** has been oriented around counter-terrorism, without addressing the causes promoting sectarian minds. Several key sectarian militants including leaders have been killed and arrested; meanwhile, sectarian groups are also trying to mark political presence.
19. Despite calls for registering and/or evicting **Afghan refugees**, they hardly had any role in terrorist attacks inside Pakistan.
20. As military courts came to the front, the decision to **reform criminal justice system** took backseat. The country's apex court, however, has kept the right with itself of reviewing military court's decision. Despite some on and off measures to expedite pending cases, the criminal justice system requires meaningful overhaul.

Below are some critical areas that Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) believes NAP measures should also focus on:

Countering violent ideologies

While military operations and actions taken under NAP have weakened the militants and put them under pressure, comprehensive and concerted counter-radicalization and de-radicalization programs are also needed to challenge and reduce appeal of militant ideologies, and rehabilitate repentant militants. The intensity of the extremism issue requires a multifold reintegration framework with broader focus on both violent and non-violent individuals and groups. Such an approach has not been conceived as the state is mainly relying on conventional frameworks of rehabilitation. A creative multipronged reintegration framework is needed whether the state adopts a surgical approach or a political one to tackle the menace of terrorism.

The ISIS inspiration

Pakistan recently banned the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria group. A ban may not reduce the inspiration of the ISIS among Pakistani militants, particularly when many banned groups continue to operate in Pakistan. With regards to future trends of the IS inspiration and influence in Pakistan, a lot will depend

on Pakistani state's efforts to achieve security and eliminate militant groups and ideologies. In the short term it means how the ongoing security operations, mainly in FATA and Karachi, proceed and conclude, and how the National Action Plan is implemented by the federal and provincial governments. At the same time, Pakistan will need to enhance border-security and counter-militancy cooperation with Afghanistan where ISIS is increasing its influence; many Pakistani Taliban militants who pledged allegiance to or supported ISIS have also relocated to Afghanistan.

Cross-border terrorist networks

Operation Zarb-e-Azb has pushed a big part of the terrorists' infrastructure to the other side of the border in Afghanistan, mainly in Kunar, Nuristan and Khost provinces. These groups could try to re-establish in FATA in future; they are already engaged in cross-border attacks inside Pakistan. Two things are imperative to respond to the threat: first, political and administrative reforms in FATA, which will not only deny militants a support base but also improve local security structures; and secondly, efforts to evolve some broader joint security mechanism with Afghanistan.

Illegal weapons

Easy availability of heavy weapons in Pakistan is a major challenge for the security forces' counter-militancy drive. According to one estimate, 20 million illegal weapons are in circulation in Pakistan. Sectarian terrorist groups and nationalist insurgents in Balochistan appear to have recently adopted targeted killings as the foremost instrument of terrorism. Easy access to lethal weapons has made their task easier.

Threat perception

Law enforcement departments need a dedicated platform to scientifically monitor the changing behaviors, trends and emerging patterns of terrorist groups. This initiative will help them to broaden their threat perception and evolve effective responses. So far, it has been difficult for law enforcement agencies to think beyond the established threats. Pakistan is a frontline state in the war against terrorism but Al-Qaeda has never been on its threat-perception radar. The same is true for ISIS, which is now transforming local terrorist groups.

Internally Displaced Persons

The repatriation and rehabilitation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from North Waziristan and Khyber tribal regions requires urgent attention of the federal and provincial governments as well as the military leadership. The government needs swift action to not only provides full facilities to the IDPs but also to check undesirable practices and exploitation of the displaced persons by charity organizations in IDP camps. There is a need for making government aid agencies more effective in order to revive and enhance the IDPs' confidence in the state.

FATA mainstreaming

There is an urgent need to speed up the FATA reforms process. In recent months, militants have started efforts to re-establish themselves in parts of FATA, mainly in those agencies where there is less military presence or pressure including Bajaur, South Waziristan and Kurram. Attacks on tribal elders, who are members of government-supported tribal peace committees, have also increased in recent weeks, mainly in Bajaur and Khyber agencies. A review of militants' growth in FATA in past suggests that they took advantage of existing vacuum in political and administrative structures and further weakened them by attacking the tribal elders, who have a key role in political administration. They could do so again in future, particularly when military pressure will be eased, if FATA's political and administrative structures are not mainstreamed or reformed.

Prison security and reforms

This is an important area that is being neglected in the counterterrorism framework. After the jail breaks in Dera Ismail Khan and Bannu and an unsuccessful attempt to breach the central jail in Karachi last year, the need for enhancing prison security has become more pronounced. The jails in Pakistan are not only providing safe havens to terrorists to continue their activities but also serve as recruitment centers for terrorist groups. Jail reforms are also critical because terrorist groups have infiltrated police and prison officials.

Building capacity of police

The police need to be equipped with new technologies and resources but utilizing the available and allocated resources for the force is another critical issue. The operational and technical assistance and capacity building of police is an important area that needs focus. The training programs need to be focused

on technology-led policing along with attention to management, intelligence gathering, mobility and connectivity. At the same time, the NAP should prioritize the de-politicization of police, which is the key to making it a professional force.

Timeline of NAP actions

When?	What?	The source?
Dec. 30, 2014	The five religious educational boards agreed to consider government proposal of adding modern education in their syllabus.	<i>Dawn</i> , December 31, 2014, http://www.dawn.com/news/1154216/seminaries-agree-to-consider-incorporating-modern-education .
Jan. 1, 2015	The federal government has set up three special courts in three provincial capitals to try terror suspects	<i>The Nation</i> , January 2, 2015, http://nation.com.pk/national/02-Jan-2015/three-special-courts-set-up-to-try-terror-suspects .
Jan. 1, 2015	Government of Punjab announced head money for two terrorists of Lashker-e-Jhangvi (LeJ).	<i>Dunya</i> , January 2, 2015, http://e.dunya.com.pk/detail.php?date=2015-01-02&edition=ISL&id=1474043_21367253 .
Jan. 3, 2015	Interior Minister claims that action against the TTP and its supporters across Pakistan have been launched.	<i>Dawn</i> , January 4, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1154988 .
Jan. 3, 2015	Anti-Terrorism Court issued black warrants for seven terrorists including four militants of banned LeJ.	<i>Dawn</i> , January 4, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1154910 .
Jan. 5, 2015	Supreme Court and Lahore High Court, separately, acquitted five death row prisoners and ordered their immediate release.	<i>Express</i> , January 6, 2015, http://www.express.com.pk/e-paper/PoPupwindow.aspx?newsID=1102613831&Issue=NP_LHE&Date=20150106 .
Jan. 6, 2015	21 st amendment establishing military courts for two years, passed.	<i>Dunya</i> , January 7, 2015, http://e.dunya.com.pk/detail.php?date=2015-01-07&edition=LHR&id=1481005_88325544 .
Jan. 7, 2015	Two terrorists convicted of sectarian terrorism were hanged in Multan Central Jail.	<i>Daily Express</i> , January 8, 2015, http://www.express.com.pk/e-paper/PoPupwindow.aspx?newsID=1102616845&Issue=NP_ISB&Date=20150108 .

Jan. 8, 2015	Punjab government promulgated ordinance on security of various institutions like schools, colleges.	<i>Dawn</i> , January 9, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1155881 .
Jan. 8, 2015	Punjab government promulgated ordinance for keeping a “record of tenants and temporary residents”.	<i>Dawn</i> , January 9, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1155881 .
Jan. 9, 2015	Pakistan Army announced establishment of nine military courts.	<i>Dawn</i> , January 10, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1156104 .
Jan. 10, 2015	Only a “handful” of proscribed organizations will face government action, at least in the initial days, said a news report.	<i>Dawn</i> , January 11, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1156321 .
Jan. 13, 2015	Four terrorists given death penalty.	<i>Dawn</i> , January 14, 2015, http://tribune.com.pk/story/821558/attack-on-isi-office-atc-hands-down-death-penalty-to-ttp-activists .
Jan. 13, 2015	PM-chaired meeting discussed issues relating to madrassa financing.	<i>Dawn</i> , January 14, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1156907 .
Jan. 13, 2015	Interior ministry completed registration and scrutiny of seminaries in Islamabad identifying 160 seminaries as illegal.	<i>Dunya</i> , January 14, 2015, http://e.dunya.com.pk/detail.php?date=2015-01-14&edition=ISL&id=1492942_53480617 .
Jan. 14, 2015	Interior Minister Nisar told a top meeting about the presence of 95 active banned groups in Punjab.	<i>Dawn</i> , January 15, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1157108 .
Jan. 14, 2015	Interior Minister met senior Saudi diplomat to deliberate upon “how to stop financial support of banned outfits from Saudi Arabia, among other issues.”	<i>Express Tribune</i> , January 15, 2015, http://tribune.com.pk/story/822077/exhortation-riyadh-urged-to-help-choke-terror-money .

Jan. 15, 2015	Senate Committee suggested amending Anti-Money Laundering Act, 2010, to ward off any international reaction.	<i>Dawn</i> , January 16, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1157345 .
Jan. 15, 2015	A militant of Sipah-e-Sahaba was hanged to death in Karachi central jail.	<i>Dawn</i> , January 16, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1157280 .
Jan. 17, 2015	Convicted LeJ militant Akram Lahori, involved in sectarian killings, was hanged to death in Kot Lakhpat jail in Lahore.	<i>Daily Times</i> , January 18, 2015, http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/E-Paper/Lahore/2015-01-18/page-1/detail-6 .
Jan. 18, 2015	The government has put 54,000 suspected militants under Fourth Schedule, meant to monitor their activities.	<i>Express Tribune</i> , January 19, 2015, http://tribune.com.pk/story/823183/new-terror-watch-list-catalogues-5400-militants .
Jan. 19, 2015	A special feature on fighting cybercrime reported about the presence of fake accounts condoning terrorism.	<i>Dawn</i> , January 20, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1158086 .
Jan. 20, 2015	Punjab government promulgated ordinance banning glorification of terrorists.	<i>Dawn</i> , January 21, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1158400 .
Jan. 21, 2015	Security forces traced involvement of Ghazi Force in terrorism.	<i>Express Tribune</i> , January 22, 2015, http://tribune.com.pk/story/825538/intelligence-update-ghazi-force-is-gaining-ground-says-reports .
Jan. 21, 2015	Interior Ministry of Pakistan reportedly included Jamaatud Dawa (JuD) and Haqqani network in banned outfits' list.	<i>Dawn</i> , January 21, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1158484 .
Jan.21, 2015	FIA caught 320 million rupees used for terror financing.	<i>Jang</i> , January 22, 2015, https://e.jang.com.pk/01-22-2015/pindi/pic.asp?picname=535.gif .

Jan. 22, 2015	Foreign Office of Pakistan avoided confirming proscription of JuD and Haqqani network, saying that Pakistan, obliging UN charter, is required to go against those in the sanction list.	<i>Dawn</i> , January 23, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1158809/confusion-over-status-of-jud-haqqani-network .
Jan. 22, 2015	Records seized from a bank in Peshawar suspected of terror financing.	<i>Mashriq</i> , January 23, 2015, http://www.dailymashriq.com.pk/index.php?date=2015-01-23&edition=&type= .
Jan. 22, 2015	An intelligence agency asked the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Administration to take action against shops selling hate material.	<i>Express Tribune</i> , January 23, 2015, http://tribune.com.pk/story/825949/countering-extremism-city-admin-told-to-remove-hate-material-from-shops .
Jan. 22, 2015	JuD announced to continue with its work and condemned anti-JuD statements.	<i>Jang</i> , January 23, 2015, https://e.jang.com.pk/01-23-2015/pindi/pic.asp?picname=522.gif .
Jan. 23, 2015	According to a report on NAP, the Prime Minister's House claimed that Punjab was leading on the implementation.	<i>Dawn</i> , January 24, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1159091/punjab-ahead-of-other-provinces-in-anti-terror-steps .
Jan. 28, 2015	Senate was told that around 80 seminaries are receiving foreign aid worth 300 million rupees.	<i>Express Tribune</i> , January 29, 2015, http://tribune.com.pk/story/829407/year-2013-14-80-seminaries-received-rs300m-in-foreign-aid .
Jan. 30, 2015	Government report claims that Punjab is still ahead in implementing NAP: out of the 183,547 people arrested nationwide, 179,309 were from Punjab.	<i>The News</i> , January 31, 2015, http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-35612-9,074-operations-conducted-in-Punjab .
Jan. 30, 2015	Minister of State for Interior told Senate that only 23 seminaries in Sindh, KP and	<i>Dawn</i> , January 31, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1160627 .

	Balochistan are receiving foreign funding.	
Jan. 31, 2015	First batch of Punjab Counter-Terrorism Force, comprising 421 corporals, including 16 females, passed out.	<i>Express Tribune</i> , February 1, 2015, http://tribune.com.pk/story/830895/threat-containment-govt-bringing-new-laws-to-combat-extremism-cm .
Feb. 1, 2015	Wafaqul Madaris refused to register seminaries unless issues with religious ministry are sorted out.	<i>Dunya</i> , February 2, 2015, http://e.dunya.com.pk/detail.php?date=2015-02-02&edition=ISL&id=1526556_22760021 .
Feb. 2, 2015	Sindh government approves formation of Anti-Terrorism Force.	Radio Pakistan, February 2, 2015, http://www.radio.gov.pk/newsdetail/66806/8 .
Feb. 3, 2015	Two convicts accused of sectarian killings were hanged in Karachi Central Jail.	<i>The News</i> , February 4, 2015, http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-35680-Two-convicts-from-banned-outfit-hanged-in-Karachi .
Feb. 5, 2015	Rawalpindi/Islamabad police given mobile-phones tracing technology, for the first time.	<i>Jang</i> , February 6, 2015, https://e.jang.com.pk/02-06-2015/pindi/pic.asp?picname=537.gif .
Feb. 6, 2015	According to a brief given to the Prime Minister, 10,616 people held in 14,886 search operations across the country.	<i>The News</i> , February 7, 2015, http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-35751-10616-held-in-country-in-14886-search-operations .
Feb. 7, 2015	Sufi Mohammad, head of defunct TNSM, was indicted by an ATC in Peshawar in rebellion case.	<i>Nawa-e-Waqt</i> , February 8, 2015, http://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/Lahore/2015-02-08/page-1/detail-9 .
Feb. 10, 2015	In what is considered as a veiled reference to Saudi Kingdom, the Foreign Office of Pakistan said that money sent through informal channels will be scrutinized.	<i>Dawn</i> , February 11, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1162846/saudi-money-will-be-scrutinised-fo .

Feb. 13, 2015	The government barred foreign students from admission in seminaries.	<i>Nai Baat</i> , February 14, 2015, http://naibaat.com.pk/ePaper/lahore/14-02-2015/details.aspx?id=p1_16.jpg .
Feb. 14, 2015	Deobandi seminaries board opposed government plan of restricting admission to foreign students into seminaries.	<i>Dawn</i> , February 15, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1163707 .
Feb. 19, 2015	Balochistan's Anti-Terror Force passed out, comprising 200 personnel including 18 women.	<i>Nai Baat</i> , February 20, 2015, http://naibaat.com.pk/ePaper/islamabad/20-02-2015/details.aspx?id=p1_28.jpg .
Feb. 19, 2015	A senior Balochistan government official conceded that 234 madrassas in the province receive funds from Muslim countries.	<i>Express Tribune</i> , February 20, 2015, http://tribune.com.pk/story/841298/countering-extremism-in-balochistan-234-madrassas-receive-foreign-cash-official .
Mar. 3, 2015	A news report quoted government officials as saying that cyber units had failed to "disable or block" websites of the TTP.	<i>Express Tribune</i> , March 4, 2015, http://epaper.tribune.com.pk/DisplayDetails.aspx?ENI_ID=11201003040205&EN_ID=11201003040064&EMID=11201003040036 .
Mar. 4, 2015	IG Punjab told Senate Committee that 147 seminaries in Punjab are receiving foreign assistance.	<i>Dunya</i> , March 05, 2015, http://e.dunya.com.pk/detail.php?date=2015-03-05&edition=ISL&id=1578237_88283081 .
Mar. 11, 2015	A news report said that NACTA needs "men and money" to fight terror.	<i>The News</i> , March 11, 2015, http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-36332-Nacta-needs-men-and-money-to-fight-terror .
Mar. 11, 2015	Madrassas not registered with any of the five boards were asked to register with the Madrassa Education Board.	<i>Jang</i> , Islamabad, March 12, 2015.
Mar. 12, 2015	A news report said Punjab government has geo-tagged	<i>Express Tribune</i> , March 12, 2015, http://tribune.com.pk/story/8

	11,000 religious seminaries across the province.	51861/geo-tagging-database-punjab-maps-location-of-11000-madrassas.
Mar. 28, 2015	According to a report submitted to the PM, 32,347 people held in 28,826 operations by security forces.	<i>Daily Times</i> , March 29, 2015, http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/E-Paper/Lahore/2015-03-29/page-1/detail-0 .
Mar. 30, 2015	"Pakistan to raise a 12,000-strong force to guard Chinese working along CPEC," claimed a media report quoting government officials.	<i>Express Tribune</i> , March 30, 2015, http://tribune.com.pk/story/861078/economic-corridor-12000-strong-force-to-guard-chinese-workers .
Mar. 31, 2015	Punjab Home minister shared that so far 14,500 out of 16,000 seminaries in Punjab have been registered.	Radio Pakistan, March 31, 2015, http://radio.gov.pk/newsdetail/67203/7 .
Apr. 2, 2015	A media report said Punjab police couldn't arrest 150 wanted men identified in red and black books.	<i>Nai Baat</i> , Islamabad, April 2, 2015.
Apr. 2, 2015	Military courts award death to six militants on terror charges.	<i>The News</i> , April 3, 2015, http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-36762-Military-courts-award-death-to-six-terrorists .
Apr. 10, 2015	A news report claimed that the accounts NACTA claims to have frozen recently, were rather frozen over a period of time.	<i>Dawn</i> , April 10, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1174993 .
Apr. 14, 2015	A media report claimed that the ministry of religious affairs on March 13 had forwarded the new madrassa registration form to the collective body of all the five Wafaqul Madaris – the Ittehad-i-Tanzeematul Madaris Deenya (Ittehad), but majority of seminary	<i>Dawn</i> , April 14, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1175832 .

	boards are undecided about the new registration forms.	
Apr. 14, 2015	Authorities stopped a JUD leader, Maulana Ameer Hamza, at Lahore airport, from travelling to Saudi Arabia. His name was on Exit Control List.	<i>The News</i> , April 15, 2015, http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-312754-JuD-leader-barred-from-leaving-country .
Apr. 16, 2015	Electronic Crime Bill, imposing 14 year punishment and 5 crore fine, was approved by the National Assembly Standing Committee on Information Technology	<i>Dunya</i> , April 17, 2015, http://e.dunya.com.pk/detail.php?date=2015-04-17&edition=ISL&id=1650867_12164261 .
Apr. 30, 2015	ATC awarded life imprisonment to 10 militants for attacking Malala Yousafzai in 2012.	<i>The News</i> , May 1, 2015, http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-37269-10-get-life-term-in-Malala-attack-case .
May 11, 2015	At least 29 former militants completed training at the rehabilitation center in Khar.	<i>The News</i> , May 12, 2015, http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-317724-Briefs...
May 18, 2015	A news report quoted a senior officer saying that 140 out of the 30,000 people arrested across the country were collaborating with foreign spy agencies.	<i>Express Tribune</i> , May 18, 2015, http://epaper.tribune.com.pk/DisplayDetails.aspx?ENI_ID=11201005180005&EN_ID=11201005180002&EMID=11201005180002 .
May 23, 2015	Punjab Police efforts against hate material came under objections, after the courts released arrested publishers and book-sellers, raising questions as to what is hate material.	<i>Dawn</i> , May 23, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1183713 .
May 26, 2015	As many as 13 madrassas involved in militancy raided in Punjab; 43 people arrested.	<i>Nawa-e-Waqt</i> , Islamabad, May 27, 2015.
May 27, 2015	In a meeting presided over by the PM, the government acceded that NAP requires	<i>Dawn</i> , May 28, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1184691 .

	"more effective implementation."	
Jun. 4, 2015	Ever since moratorium on the death penalty has been lifted, 151 people have been executed, of which 23 were convicted of terrorism	<i>Express Tribune</i> , June 4, 2015, http://tribune.com.pk/story/897344/capital-punishment-23-terror-convicts-among-151-hanged .
Jun. 26, 2015	A report submitted by intelligence agencies to interior ministry revealed that despite strict measures, more than 60 banned outfits still collected funds.	<i>Dunya</i> , June 27, 2015, http://e.dunya.com.pk/detail.php?date=2015-06-27&edition=ISL&id=1765403_67129434 .
Jun. 26, 2015	A written reply submitted by Attorney General of Pakistan (AGP) Salman Aslam Butt in the Supreme Court said the government had banned no new outfit since the APS attack.	<i>Express Tribune</i> , June 29, 2015, http://tribune.com.pk/story/911569/no-outfits-banned-after-aps-massacre-top-court-told .
Jun. 28, 2015	Government mapped Pakistanis' donations to madrassas at 650 billion rupees in charity	<i>Nawa-e-Waqt</i> , June 29, 2015, http://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/islamabad/2015-06-29/page-12 .
Jul. 12, 2015	A media report said Balochistan government planned to deploy surveillance drones against criminal elements.	<i>Pakistan Today</i> , July 12, 2015. http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2015/07/12/national/balochistan-govt-to-deploy-surveillance-drones .
Jul. 12, 2015	Sindh Apex Committee admitted that more than 40 seminaries are having links with terrorists, among them 24 are in Karachi.	<i>Nawa-e-Waqt</i> , July 13, 2015, http://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/islamabad/2015-07-13/page-1 .
Jul. 13, 2015	A report highlighted that after six months of announcement to do so under NAP, Islamabad police has failed to establish the special anti-terror force.	<i>Dawn</i> , July 13, 2015, http://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=13_07_2015_004_001 .
Jul. 16, 2015	A news report revealed that not a single unregistered	<i>Dawn</i> , July 16, 2015,

	madrassa, out of 579, has been sealed in Karachi.	http://www.dawn.com/news/1194706 .
Jul 16, 2015	Punjab Apex Committee, meeting for the sixth time, banned Zakat and Fitrana collection by proscribed organizations.	<i>Dawn</i> , July 17, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1194988 .
Jul. 16, 2015	According to a report submitted by the government in the Supreme Court of Pakistan, 142 NGOs and seminaries have been issued audit notices.	<i>Express</i> , July 17, 2015, http://www.express.com.pk/e-paper/PoPupwindow.aspx?newsID=1102965033&Issue=NP_ISB&Date=20150717 .
Jul. 22, 2015	The Supreme Court expressed its concerns over the ineffectiveness of the National Counter-Terrorism Authority (NACTA) in eradicating terrorism in the country.	<i>Express Tribune</i> , July 23, 2015, http://tribune.com.pk/story/924786/poorly-funded-nacta-gets-rs100m-against-rs2b-demand .
Jul. 25, 2015	A media report claimed that the KP government had planned a de-radicalization program worth 65 million rupees.	<i>The News</i> , July 25, 2015, http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-7-330513-Govt-plans-project-to-de-radicalise-militants-in-KP .
Jul. 29, 2015	Punjab government told the Supreme Court that it had registered cases against several banned outfits for illegally collecting funds.	<i>Dawn</i> , July 30, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1197226 .
Jul. 29, 2015	Malik Ishaq, leader of Lashker-e-Jhangvi, was killed along with two sons in an alleged police encounter in Muzaffargarh (Punjab).	<i>The News</i> , July 30, 2015, http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-192503-Malik-Ishaq-among-two-sons-killed-in-alleged-police-shootout .
Aug. 5, 2015	Supreme Court upheld the constitutional amendment made for establishing military courts, keeping the review powers with itself (SC).	<i>Express Tribune</i> , August 6, 2015, http://tribune.com.pk/story/932537/supreme-court-upholds-establishment-of-military-courts .

Aug. 6, 2015	PM approves the absorption of National Crisis Management Cell into NACTA	<i>Nai Baat</i> , Islamabad, August 7, 2015.
Aug. 6, 2015	Punjab counter terrorism department along with intelligence officials undertook a joint search operation in seminaries across the province detaining several students.	<i>Dawn</i> , August 7, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1198863/search-operations-in-punjab-seminaries .
Aug. 9, 2015	A total of 30 seminaries had been closed so far and put under “suspect” category, said Interior Minister.	<i>Dawn</i> , August 10, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1199516/30-seminaries-closed-says-minister .
Aug. 13, 2015	Military court awarded death to six militants involved in APS attack and to one militant involved in Safoora Goth, Karachi attack.	<i>The News</i> , August 14, 2015, http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-39093-Seven-terrorists-awarded-death-by-military-court .
Aug. 15, 2015	An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Lahore sentenced an Al-Qaeda man to life imprisonment.	<i>Dawn</i> , August 16, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1200797 .
Aug. 20, 2015	A media report indicated that only two of the 25 prisoners hanged in Adiala Jail Rawalpindi so far were tried under the anti-terrorism act.	<i>The News</i> , August 20, 2015, http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-335257-Only-two-of-25-executed-prisoners .
Aug. 23, 2015	An intelligence agency tracked down a gang of 52 <i>hundi</i> and <i>hawla</i> dealers, all Afghans, involved in terror financing.	<i>Express Tribune</i> , August 24, 2015, http://tribune.com.pk/story/943605/hundi-and-hawala-52-afghans-involved-in-terror-finance-nabbed .
Aug. 24, 2015	The federal cabinet vowed to deal firmly with sectarian outfits.	<i>The News</i> , August 25, 2015, http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-39258-Govt-to-get-tough-with-sectarian-outfits-now .

Aug. 24, 2015	A police report claimed that the number of madrassas in Karachi has increased.	<i>Jang</i> , August 25, 2015, https://e.jang.com.pk/08-25-2015/pindi/pic.asp?picname=54.gif .
Aug. 25, 2015	A news report claimed detained commanders of TTP Swat chapter, Muslim Khan and Mehmood Khan, had died in custody of security forces owing to their illness.	<i>The News</i> , August 25, 2015, http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-7-336075-TTP-Swat-commanders-Muslim-KhanMehmood-Khan-die-in-custody .
Aug. 25, 2015	Sindh government ordered action against 49 seminaries having links with terrorists.	<i>Dawn</i> , August 26, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1202829 .
Aug. 25, 2015	Punjab law minister claimed that 20 seminaries once accused of having links with militants are no long involved in militancy.	<i>Dawn</i> , August 26, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1202904 .
Aug. 26, 2015	A news report revealed that 703 unregistered seminaries in FATA will be black listed soon.	<i>Express Tribune</i> , August 26, 2015, http://tribune.com.pk/story/944774/clamping-down-703-unregistered-tribal-seminaries-to-be-blacklisted .
Aug. 27, 2015	The government of Pakistan officially banned ISIS in Pakistan, as per notification issued by the interior ministry.	<i>Jang</i> , August 28, 2015, https://e.jang.com.pk/08-28-2015/pindi/pic.asp?picname=528.gif .
Aug. 28, 2015	Spokesman for Wafaqul Madaris Al-Arabia complained that only Deobandi seminaries were targeted in recent raids.	<i>Dawn</i> , August 29, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1203597 .
Sep. 7, 2015	The top civilian and military leadership held a meeting with representatives of religious seminaries indicating government's renewed resolve to reform madrassas.	<i>Dawn</i> , September 8, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1205572 .

Fighting terror: institutional structure in the context of NAP

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The National Action Plan, announced after the December 16 attack, enlists 20 points meant to fight terrorism in the country. To undertake these points, the government constituted several committees. A central coordinating body NACTA was already tasked to collaborate on counter-terror information. Above all, apex committees comprising civil-military leadership were formed in all four provinces, on the same subject.

This essay describes the several institutions, intertwined with the key issues, emanating out of the NAP.

Sub committees

To oversee the implementation of the 20 points of NAP, the government initially constituted 15 different subcommittees. These committees comprised ministers, senior government officials, and top army officials.

Eleven (11) of these committees were to be headed by the federal minister of interior, Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan. This makes him head of almost 73% of the committees, including the ones on preventing emergence of militias, on curbing hate speech, and on stemming proscribed outfits.

The remaining four (4) committees were led by finance minister Senator Ishaq Dar, on terror financing; information minister Senator Pervaiz Rashid, on militant glorification in media, and on justice system reforms; Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mehtab Khan, on FATA reforms and smooth return of Internally Displaced Persons.

In addition to these, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was to head a special committee overseeing overall implementation of the NAP.

All the 15 committees formed to supervise implementation of the NAP are lying dormant. There is no information on the meetings held, if any.

Interestingly, federal interior minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan said that the subcommittees were constituted for “consultation to devise a cogent anti-terror policy”. NAP, he said, “outcome of that consultative process.”¹ This should mean that the committees were automatically called off, once NAP was announced. “The process against the terrorism and extremism has been streamlined”, he said justifying the absence of committees.

¹Authors’ interview with Federal Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan.

Chronology of the events, however, suggests the committees were formed after announcement of the NAP. In fact, the committees were formed on the points of NAP.

Minister of state for interior affairs, Muhammad Balighur Rehman, however, linked their formation to monitoring the implementation of NAP. Initially, he said, these committees met regularly.² “The frequency of the meetings has dropped down in recent months, as the implementation of the NAP is now directly being monitored by the PM’s Office.”³

Rehman, however, parried questions about composition of the different committees and their performance.

Conversely, Rustam Shah Mohmand, one of the authors of the NAP and privy to the subsequent developments, says the committees were supposed to meet fortnightly and send a performance report to the prime minister for further evaluation.⁴ “As per SOP, fortnight meetings of these committees were necessary to assess the performance of law enforcement agencies and

further deliberations, but this is not being followed,” he said.

Apex committees

As if these committees were not enough, apex committees comprising military and political leadership were also formed in all provinces to oversee NAP’s implementation there. The formation of the apex committees was announced by the ISPR through a press release, which said that they would help coordinate the security agencies working in different provinces and implement the NAP.⁵

The ISPR initially said it would “constitute both military and political leadership.” The post-meeting statements often share details about the participants of the meeting. But the exact composition of each apex committees remains a mystery.

Many of the official figures on arrests and crackdowns are taken from the press releases issued after the apex committees’ meetings.

The number of apex committees meetings held in different provinces are also not shared publicly. The

²Authors’ interview with Minister of State for Interior Muhammad Balighur Rehman.

³ Ibid.

⁴Authors’ interview with Rustam Shah Mohmand, a former diplomat and one of the authors of the NAP.

⁵Press Release, No PR5/2015-ISPR, January 3, 2015, https://www.ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press_release&date=2015/1/3.

interior ministry said that so far 30 meetings of apex committees of all provinces have been held which monitor the progress report.

Apparently, it was NACTA's job to coordinate with all the apex committees and maintain the record, but that isn't being done there because of NACTA's own limitations of funds and human power.

NACTA

The NACTA was mainly responsible to keep record of all the meetings of the committees formed for implementation of the national counter-terrorism strategy, including meetings of the provincial apex committees.⁶

Reality, however, seems to differ. Azhar Karim Khawaja, former National Coordinator (NC) of the NACTA, says nobody in the provinces cares to send or share information with the authority because of its ineffectiveness. "There is no institutional record of these meetings with the NACTA mainly because the authority is facing shortage of manpower and resources," he said.⁷

However, NACTA's outgoing National Coordinator claimed to be in touch with home secretaries of the provinces, counter terrorism

departments, inspector generals of police and security agencies on implementation of the NAP. "We keep close coordination with the provinces and apprise the prime minister on implementation status of the NAP through periodic reports," he claimed.⁸

Part of the confusion probably emanates from how NACTA is foreseen. The authority's outgoing NC categorically said the NACTA is not part of any decision-making committee like the apex committees. Instead, NACTA, he said, serves only as a think-tank to the prime minister and interior ministry.

On day-to-day performance, the authority has to play its role. Since the release of NAP, not a single board meeting has been held so far. The government's plan of establishing Joint Intelligence Director has yet to materialize. Despite repeated requests, NACTA declined to share any details on implementation of the NAP, raising question marks over its performance, transparency, and capacity.

The low performance is owed to low capacity and budget. Interestingly, it's outgoing NC too acceded that the authority is understaffed and under-resourced, saying the sanctioned strength of the body is 203 while presently only 57 employees are

⁶Authors' interview with former National Coordinator of NACTA Azhar Karim Khawaja.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸Authors' interview with the NACTA National Coordinator Hamid Ali Khan.

working⁹. “Only three officers are working in the NACTA to look after day to day affairs while rest is all the support staff,” he said. (Khan himself left the office in August 2015).

Even now, in the 2015-16 budget, the government didn’t allocate a single penny for the authority, speaking volumes about will of the government to make the NACTA a cogent institution to fight terrorism.

Although the Minister of Interior replies that it has asked for funds for NACTA, the effort seems late and cosmetic.¹⁰ To NACTA, rejections to fund demands are not new. “Each year a committee is constituted after the budget for recommendation of funds for the NACTA but this never sees light of the day too,” said Hamid Ali Khan.¹¹

Finance Ministry has its own reasons of not releasing funds. Secretary Finance Dr Waqar Masood informed the Senate Standing Committee on Finance that the government still remains indecisive about structure of the authority.¹² “The Finance Ministry is ready to allocate funds for

the NACTA, but Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has yet to decide about structure of the authority,” he said.¹³

NACTA Act places it under the Prime Minister, but in July 2013, the government notified to bring the NACTA under ambit of the Interior Ministry.

Although the court subsequently declared transfer of the NACTA from the prime minister’s control to the interior ministry illegal, the interior ministry is still overseeing the NACTA.¹⁴ It is the interior ministry that is managing day to day expenditures of the NACTA through its secret funds and National Crisis Management Cell’s budget.¹⁵

Javed Iqbal, a former law officer at NACTA, who filed the first petition against the transfer of NACTA to interior minister, isn’t pursuing against the recent state of affairs.¹⁶ Like many others, a former head of NACTA deem the status as “illegal.”

NACTA’s questionable performance is often owned to the turf war between civilian and military. As to

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Authors’ interview with Interior Ministry’s joint secretary Muhammad Asghar Chaudhry. Chaudhry said: “We are struggling to get funds for the NACTA, as this is a primary institution to devise policies and counter terrorism in the country.”

¹¹ Authors’ interview with NACTA National Coordinator Hamid Ali Khan.

¹² Shahbaz Rana, "Senate body seeks funds for APS victims' families," *Express Tribune*, July 14, 2015.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Malik Asad, "Nacta's transfer to interior ministry declared illegal," *Dawn*, July 10, 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1118282>.

¹⁵ Authors’ interview with NACTA’ former Law Officer Javed Iqbal.

¹⁶ Ibid.

what exactly divides the two is unclear.

According to a former top official of NACTA, the appointment of National Coordinator has been a major bone of contention between civilians and military, as the latter wants to take over the authority's affairs. "Until an amendment is made in the act to include khakis to be appointed as the National Coordinator, the NACTA is bound to remain a dormant body," he believed.¹⁷

The appointments made by civilian government in the NACTA were also not acceptable to the military establishment, says some, as inexperienced or junior officials were appointed to look after the sensitive matters. As per the Act, the National Coordinator should be of grade-22 officer, but the government had appointed to the post a grade-20 officer in the past.¹⁸

Yet another former official revealed that the NACTA has become a bone of contention among Prime Minister Office, Ministry of Interior and military mainly, because of foreign grants for the authority to curb terrorism and extremism. Several countries have been hinting at giving funds to NACTA. These funds, he

said, beside other issues, were hindering the authority to become an independent and professional institution. "Everybody wants to take charge of the foreign grants but nobody wants to do actual work prescribed in the NACTA Act," he said.¹⁹ (The foreign assistance, however, couldn't make its way to NACTA.)

PM-COAS meetings

To review progress on implementation of the National Action Plan, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif held regular meetings in December 2014 and January 2015; the frequency of these meetings gradually came down in subsequent months. Initially, the prime minister was briefed by relevant federal ministers, secretaries and home secretaries of ministers about progress on implementation of the NAP but gradually it reduced to only one-to-one meetings between the PM and Chief of Army Staff to discuss the anti-terror plan.

The institutions like NACTA that were supposed to be strengthened as per directions of the prime minister were ignored and that's why the implementation and strategies are being discussed in one-to-one meetings instead. The prime minister

¹⁷Author's interview with a former official of NACTA, who requested anonymity.

¹⁸For details on appointments, see Malik Asad, "Nacta chief hires private firm for

his defence", Dawn, July 2, 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1116461>

¹⁹Authors' interview with NACTA's former officer who witnessed the legal fights of NACTA

constituted a special committee on December 26, 2014 to ensure expeditious and effective implementation of the National Action Plan to wipe out terrorism in the country. He vowed to oversee the enforcement of the action plan but after that the public was not informed about meetings of the special committee and its outcome.

The special committee headed by the prime minister comprises Minister for Interior Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Pervaiz Rasheed, Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for States and Frontier Regions Abdul Qadir Baloch and Advisor to PM on Foreign Affairs and National Security Sartaj Aziz.

There is no harm in one-to-one meeting of the prime minister and the chief of army staff but the decisions made in these meetings should be conveyed to relevant security institutions through a proper mechanism. Currently, decisions are made in the one-to-one meetings without consultation and deliberations of the relevant

institutions that later hinder the implementation process.²⁰

Key issues

Noticeably, civil-military relations have also been impacting the on-going operations against terrorists and militants, let alone implementation of the NAP. In February 2015, Director General of ISPR, military's media wing, said that some parts of the National Action Plan are being implemented while "other aspects require more time due to political challenge."²¹

A former military general argued, "It is true the civil-military relations have been hampering the fight against terrorism. Part of the reason is that political leadership has always preferred to outsource the fight against militancy and extremism to military and army-led institutions."²²

The blame game should come to an end, as Pakistan cannot be terror free until all security agencies, military and civil institutions work together with the same passion to flush out militants.²³

Another issue is about the extent to which institutions, as opposed to

²⁰Authors' interview with former diplomat and one of the authors of the NAP Rustam Shah Mohmand.

²¹"NAP will take time to implement due to political challenges: DG ISPR," *The News*, June 19, 2015.

²²Authors' interview with Gen (retd.) Talat Masood, a defence and security expert based in Islamabad.

²³ Ibid.

individuals, are responsible for implementing NAP's points.

The case of madrasa reforms, a NAP point, is pertinent to look into.

Background interviews reveal that the state minister himself is reluctant to register the madrassas under the new policy. He argues that the government's process of registration of the seminaries is flawed as it wants to scrutinise funds of the madrassas but doesn't want to provide any

support for the students, most of them are either orphan or come from humble backgrounds.²⁴

"Being a state minister, I cannot allow the faulty registration system of the madrassas to go ahead. I have expressed my strong reservations on the process and it is stalled now," said Hasnat Shah.²⁵

List of sub NAP subcommittee and their members¹

Committee Name	Members
Main Committee	Mian M. Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of Pakistan (Chair) Interior Minister Finance Minister Minister for Planning Information Minister Defence Minister Minister for SAFRON Governor KP Advisor to PM on Foreign Affairs & National Security Special Assistant to PM on Parliamentary Affairs
Afghan Refugees	Ch. Nisar A. Khan, Interior Minister (Chair) Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister SAFRON Chairman NADRA

²⁴Authors' interview with State Minister for Ministry of Religious Affairs and Inter Faith Harmony Muhammad Amin Ul Hasnat Shah.

²⁵ Ibid.

¹The list is derived from the website of NAP Watch, a watchdog on NAP, available at: www.napwatch.pk.

	Other senior officials
Armed Militias	Ch. Nisar A. Khan, Interior Minister (Chair) Director General Inter-Services Intelligence Director General Intelligence Bureau DG Military Operations (MO) Interior Secretary National Coordinator of NACTA Provincial Home Secretaries including FATA, GB & AJK
Counter-Terrorism Force	Ch. Nisar A. Khan, Interior Minister (Chair) Minister Defence Minister Finance Director General Military Operations Finance Secretary Interior Secretary National Coordinator NACTA
Criminal Justice System	Ch. Nisar A. Khan, Federal Interior Minister (Chair) Interior Secretary Provincial Home Secretaries Representative of ISI Representative of IB Law Secretary
FATA Reforms	Mehtab Abbasi, Governor KP (Chair) Finance Minister Minister Planning Minister SAFRON Secretary Economic Affairs Corps Commander 11 Corps Peshawar and FATA
Hate Speech	Ch. Nisar A. Khan, Interior Minister (Chair) Minister Religious Affairs Minister Planning Minister Information DG ISI DG IB Secretary Interior National Coordinator NACTA MD PTV All provincial Home Secretaries All provincial Secretaries of Auqaf
Karachi Operation	Ch. Nisar A. Khan, Interior Minister (Chair)

	Governor Sindh CM Sindh DG Rangers And others (not specified)
Madrassa Regulation	Ch. Nisar A. Khan, Interior Minister (Chair) Minister of Religious Affairs Secretary Religious Affairs State Minister for Education All Home Secretaries All Secretaries of Auqaf Departments
Proscribed Organisations	Ch. Nisar A. Khan, Interior Minister (Chair) DG ISI DG IB Secretary Interior All Provincial Home Secretaries
Religious Persecution	Ch. Nisar A. Khan, Interior Minister (Chair) Minister Religious Affairs Secretary Religious Affairs Secretary Interior Coordinator NACTA IGPs of all Provinces, GB, AJK & Islamabad All Provincial Home Secretaries All Provincial Secretaries of Auqaf Departments
Sectarian Terrorism	Ch. Nisar A. Khan, Interior Minister (Chair) DG IB IGs of all Provinces, GB, AJK & Islamabad Home Secretaries of all Provinces Heads of Counter Terrorism Departments Secretary Interior Secretary Coordinator NACTA
Social Media / Internet Abuse	Interior Ministry (Chair)

Dead wrong

Najam U Din*

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Immediately after the December 16 Taliban attack on Army Public School (APS) in Peshawar last year, Pakistan scrapped a six-year informal moratorium on executions, and approved “execution of death penalty in terrorism-related cases”.¹ The executions had been suspended in December 2008.

Within a week, by December 24, the federal government facilitated a ‘national consensus’ on a National Action Plan (NAP) to counter terrorism. Those who listened to the prime minister deliver the 20-point action plan in a televised address would recall that the first point he mentioned was resumption of execution of convicted terrorists.² This early reference indicated that capital punishment was considered one of the preferred weapons in the counter-terrorism arsenal.

Over the last two weeks of December, seven prisoners were hanged. These were mainly convicted for the 2009

attack on the military headquarters in Rawalpindi and for the 2003 assassination attempts on military ruler General Pervez Musharraf.³

Three months later, in March, Pakistan resumed executions for all death penalty offences, doing away with the caveat of hanging convicted ‘terrorists’ only.⁴

The abolition and retention arguments

Since the resumption of executions, pro- and anti-death penalty advocates have been fervently articulating whether the death penalty is a panacea to stopping terrorist attacks in Pakistan.

Several national and international human rights activists and organisations as well as the United Nations and European Union have urged the government to stop the executions and/or revive the moratorium on death penalty.⁵

¹ “PM lifts ban on death penalty in terrorism cases,” *Express Tribune*, December 17, 2014.

² “Fight against terrorism: Defining moment,” *Express Tribune*, December 25, 2014.

³ “Convicts in GHQ, Musharraf attack cases executed,” *Dawn*, December 20, 2014; “At the gallows: 4 convicts in Musharraf attack case executed,” *Express Tribune*, December 22, 2014; “Convict in Musharraf attack case hanged,” *Dawn*, January 1, 2015; Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), *The State of Human Rights in 2014*, p. 96.

⁴ “Govt ends death penalty freeze in all cases,” *The Nation*, March 11, 2015.

⁵ “UN chief urges Pakistan to end executions, reinstate death penalty moratorium,” UN News Centre, December 26, 2014; “UN rights chief urges Pakistan Government to reintroduce death penalty moratorium,” UN News Service, June 11, 2015; “EU opposes removal of moratorium on death penalty in Pakistan,” *Dawn*, December 24, 2014; “EU demands reinstatement of death penalty moratorium in Pakistan,” *Dawn*, June 11, 2015.

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) opposed capital punishment on account of “the well-documented deficiencies of the law, flaws in administration of justice and investigation methods and chronic corruption.” It stated that in these circumstances, “capital punishment allows for a high probability of miscarriage of justice, which is wholly unacceptable in a civilised society, particularly because the punishment is irreversible.”⁶

Human rights organisations argue that research around the world has shown that the death penalty does not lead to reduction in crime. They cite the high prevalence of crime in leading executing states, such as China and Iran, as evidence that capital punishment does not serve as a deterrent against crime.

On the other hand, supporters of the death penalty in Pakistan put forth their own arguments, usually citing religious mandate for capital punishment and accentuating its supposed deterrence value.

Those in favour of executions argue that this is the only way available for the government to deal with the scourge of terrorism and militancy in Pakistan. It is also argued that dangerous and hardened criminals

could neither be released nor rehabilitated and could not even be secured within the prisons, as these militants posed a constant and imminent threat of jailbreaks.⁷

‘Terrorists’ or criminals?

In order to determine whether the resumption of executions has boosted the counter-terrorism effort, as the pro-camp argues, the first step must be to grasp who is a terrorist in official reckoning and what are ‘terrorism charges’.

Pakistan’s anti-terror laws essentially bracket some offences as constituting terrorism. Thus, someone accused of crime can be counted as a ‘terrorist’, provided the charge against that person was brought under an anti-terror law.

Foremost among these laws is the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA), which, besides identifying terrorism-related offenses, also marks non-terrorism-related offenses.⁸

Such extensive application of the ATA has drawn criticism from several rights groups. In a report on death row prisoners, Justice Project Pakistan, a human rights organisation, noted that the definition of terrorism in Pakistan’s

⁶ “HRCP calls for staying planned executions; abolishing death penalty,” *Daily Times*, September 12, 2014.

⁷ “Death penalty debate,” *Dawn*, January 12, 2015.

⁸ “Pakistan lifts death penalty moratorium,” *AlJazeera*, December 17, 2014.

anti-terror laws was “vague and overly broad, bearing little relationship to terrorism as it is commonly understood” and that these laws were “being grossly overused, often in cases that bear no relation to terrorism.”⁹

‘Progress’ so far

Here are some key findings regarding the individuals executed from December 19, 2014 until July 31, 2015, drawn from media reports and data tabulated by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP):

- 195 convicts had been executed during the period mentioned, making this year’s executions in Pakistan the country’s highest over the last decade. The executions in the first five months of 2015 alone exceeded the tally of 134 – the total number of executions in 2007, the highest for any one year in the last decade, reported HRCP.¹⁰
- Of the 195 individuals put to death, no more than 42 could be called ‘terrorists’ under all possible interpretations of the word.¹¹ Even among the 42, many might only be considered common criminals – as

they were accused of committing individual crimes, which had nothing to do with any religious, political, or ideological goals.

Out of the 195 executed, only 22 people had been convicted for sectarian-, militancy- or terrorism-related charges, such as assassinations, assassination attempts, sectarian murders, killing of security officials, or hijacking.

Almost all of the remaining 173 people executed had been common criminals. This means that at least eight out of every nine convicts hanged since December last had not been ‘terrorists’ but common criminals – individuals who had been accused of murder, robbery, possession of narcotics, property disputes, etc.¹² Thus, despite the fast-paced hanging, ‘terrorists’ formed a tiny minority of those executed.¹³

- Almost all of the 22 ‘legally-sanctioned terrorists’ were hanged from December 2014 through February 2015, in the early days after the formulation of NAP. Most of the remaining 173 convicts had been executed in non-terrorism cases under the Pakistan Penal Code, and

⁹ Justice Project Pakistan and Reprieve, *Terror on Death Row*, pp. 3 & 5, December 2014, [www.jpp.org.pk/upload/Terror on Death Row/2014_12_15_PUB WEP Terrorism Report.pdf](http://www.jpp.org.pk/upload/Terror%20on%20Death%20Row/2014_12_15_PUB%20WEP%20Terrorism%20Report.pdf).

¹⁰ “HRCP concerned over 135 executions,” *Dawn*, June 4, 2015.

¹¹ A list of those executed can be seen at: hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/who-has-been-executed.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ “Militants in minority in Pakistan execution drive, deterrent effect debated,” Reuters, July 26, 2015.

under other laws, such as the Control of Narcotic Substances Act. The number of hangings rose exponentially from March 2015 onwards, when executions resumed for all capital offences. The number of hangings declined for June and July, as the government suspended executions in the name of “respecting human dignity” during the Muslim fasting month of Ramazan, which started in mid-June and ended mid-July.¹⁴

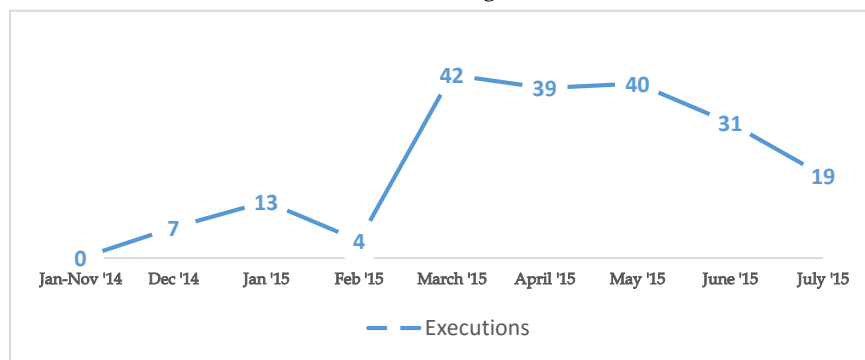
Reflections on the way forward

The death penalty can only be considered an effective terrorism-fighting tool provided it deters those engaged in militancy or terrorism.

suggesting that the security situation had improved somewhat.

But, as noted earlier, ‘terrorists’ form a small minority of those hanged. Even as the 195 executions have already put Pakistan among the world’s top executioners, the available evidence suggests that the overwhelming majority of those executed so far have not been ‘terrorists’. Whither all notions of supposed deterrence, then?

Just like some existing research lays bare the myth of capital punishment serving as a deterrent against crime, the mass executions spree that Pakistan has embarked on seems unlikely to boost significantly its anti-terrorism efforts. It has been argued, with some merit, that many



Prima facie, it might appear that the resumption of executions has coincided with some decline in the incidence and severity of terrorist attacks in the country in 2015,

of the extremist terrorists that the executions have seemingly been revived for are individuals who – on account of their indoctrination or conviction, however misplaced that might be – are committed to dying

¹⁴ “HRCP on executions: human dignity should be respected all year round,” HRCP, June 23, 2015, [hrcp-](http://hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/hrcp-on-executions-human-dignity-should-be-respected-all-year-round)

web.org/hrcpweb/hrcp-on-executions-human-dignity-should-be-respected-all-year-round.

for their 'cause'; and that the fear of hanging might not deter them.¹⁵

At one level, it can be argued that the return to executions might not have been about elimination of terrorism at all. It might just have been the state bowing to a deeply traumatised and equally brutalised society's call for retribution. As much as anything else, resuming executions after the APS massacre could well have been a message to reassure a populace yearning for peace that the state was not out of options, and that it had the stomach to act tough and take the fight to the terrorists.

The path to the gallows was chosen, perhaps, because it was the easiest one to reassure the people; or at least, easier than confronting Taliban apologists and challenging the militant ideology that persuades people to kill and die.

Or, may be the state was just waiting for an excuse to resume the hangings. After all, this is a state that chose to suspend executions for six years, without ever bothering to explain the rationale for the moratorium to the populace. Throughout this time, the state did not even pretend to try reducing the 27 odd death penalty offences on the statute books, despite reminders and advice from rights groups. It chose not to initiate a discourse on the abolition of the death penalty.

Addressing terrorism by relying on the death penalty alone would be akin to treating only the symptom and ignoring the root cause. Defeating the sort of terrorism that afflicts Pakistan would be difficult, if not impossible, without confronting and defeating the ideology of hate and intolerance that provides impetus and foot soldiers to the militant extremist establishments.

This would involve military action, learning from past mistakes of nurturing militant surrogates, reaching out to the militant rank and file with the stick of military action and the possibility of reform and rehabilitation, and effective investigation and prosecution to bring the militants to justice for their crimes.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Special courts

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In light of National Action Plan, several military-led special courts have been set up across the country. Today, they operate with secrecy. This sets wrong precedent. In any case, military courts are not the solution to cut in militancy in the long-range. What is needed is a long-term strategy, which, instead of dismantling the constitutional setup, strengthens it. So far, that is still missing.

Shrouded in secrecy

After the Peshawar carnage, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif announced National Action Plan, one of the points being the establishment of military-led special courts to try convicted terrorists. To many, this was predictable.

Predictable, because the sentences from military tribunal had come out, even before the National Action Plan was hammered out. On December 16th, as Prime Minister Sharif lifted the seven-years-old moratorium on death penalty, army chief General Raheel Shareef signed the execution warrants of six terrorists earlier tried by a military tribunal. The 20-point NAP, on the other hand, was rolled out on December 24th, 2014.

Pakistan resumed these executions, soon. Again, the first to be executed, Arshad Mehmood, was before the NAP was announced – on December 20th, 2014. A former military personnel, Arshad was earlier sentenced to death by a military

tribunal. A large number of people attended his funeral, showing the presence of pro-militant mindset, which stays unaddressed in NAP or its execution.

To establish such courts, the government, with the support of some other political parties, amended the Pakistani constitution as well as Pakistan Army Act, 1952. The first was made possible by the 21st Constitutional Amendment Bill, 2015; and the second, by Pakistan Army (Amendment) Bill, 2015.

Liberal parties voted in favour of the amendments, despite internal reservations that the changes amount to sacrificing democratic values. Pakistan People's Party Senator Raza Rabbani labeled supporting the amendments to swallowing "bitter pill" for the "security of Pakistan." Religious parties objected the move, arguing that the amendment unfairly singles out religion-inspired militancy only. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, ruling party of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a province hit hard by militancy, publicly supported the amendments but refrained from voting in their support due to political differences with the ruling party in the center.

These amendments made way for what is commonly called as military courts for a period of two years. Military officers, instead of civilian judges, will try convicted terrorists. The court operates under Judge

Advocate General, the Army's legal wing.

Under the new constitutional amendment, a total of nine military courts have been established; these include three in KP, three in Punjab, two in Sindh, and one in Balochistan. Legally, provinces have been sending terrorism cases to the military courts through the interior ministry.

By mid-2015, the military courts have sentenced 6 people to death. The Supreme Court had earlier suspended execution of these convicts until the constitutionality of the special courts was decided. However, in August 2015, the Supreme Court gave its approval to the military courts, in a divided opinion, with option of appealing military courts conviction if a question of fair trial or due process is raised by the accused.

Trials of the military courts are secret. Information about them is therefore hard to get; no one knows who is being tried, for what, and how. Overall, however, nothing is known whether the accused has hired lawyers of choice and if, at all, civilian lawyers may appear before the proceedings.

Even though interior minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan assured that only hard-core terrorists would be tried in these tribunals, several cases referred by the provincial government are of terrorists who

were being tried in Anti-Terrorism Courts. Their cases have been forwarded so that they get convicted.

In late August 2015, we have seen usage of another special law, Protection of Pakistan Act 2014, when it was invoked to arrest and detain a former federal minister in Karachi. This has raised serious questions about misuse of such laws.

Not first time

It is not the first time that military courts are set up in Pakistan. Besides the military dictators, democratic governments too have established such courts in the past. In 1970s, for instance, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto set up summary military courts in Balochistan. Likewise, in 1999, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's government asked for special courts in Sindh, amid governor's rule there; this despite that the cases could then be dealt under the Anti-Terrorism Act, introduced only two years earlier in 1997.

However, both those special tribunals, set up under Bhutto and Sharif, were challenged in the apex courts:

The ones set up by Bhutto were challenged in Lahore and Sindh high courts, in cases namely *Darvesh M. Arbey v. Federation of Pakistan (PLD 1980 Lahore 206)* and *Niaz Ahmed Khan v. Province of Sindh (PLD 1977 Karachi 604)*. The superior judiciary

declared the summary courts unconstitutional, demonstrating that the civil authorities as well as the security forces could not act outside the constitutional parameters and limits.

Same was the fate of courts set under Sharif. The Supreme Court, under Chief Justice Ajmal Mian, banned the establishment of military courts, in the case of *Sh Liaquat Hussein v. Federation of Pakistan (1999 SCMR 569)*, declaring them unconstitutional and of no legal effect. Holding that a parallel judicial system cannot exist in the country, the Supreme Court ruled that the executive is unauthorized to set up any judicial system that lacks superintendence and control of the superior courts.

This time too, the constitutionality of the military courts was challenged. Lahore High Court Bar Association challenged the establishment of military courts on the grounds similar to the one made in the past. This time, however, the court upheld the constitutional amendment establishing the military courts, but gave right to challenge convictions in superior courts on grounds of lack of due process and fair trial.

Negative development

Special courts leave a negative imprint on the country's fragile democracy.

These courts directly clash with the constitutional requirement of separation of powers. By appointing military personnel to dispense justice, the special courts in effect blur the line between judiciary and executive.

The establishment of special courts contravenes many fundamental rights the Constitution embodies: Article 4 caters for right to life, liberty and property; Article 9 provides for security of person; Article 10 stipulates the right to a fair trial and due process; and Article 14 guarantees right to dignity. All these articles are violated by the special courts.

Proponents of these speedy courts termed it need of the hour, as, they say, the civilian criminal justice, has miserably failed at convicting terrorists at all. They argue that in ordinary courts witnesses would backtrack or the prosecutors and judges would not proceed due to serious threats to their lives.

The military-led courts ignore the elaborate system put in place to otherwise try ordinary cases. For instance, under the Code of Criminal Procedure 1898, an accused is given notice of the allegations as well as copies of evidence, seven days before charges are framed against that person. But that is missing in military courts, where an accessed is already declared terrorist. The objective of punishment takes precedence over justice.

In any case, replacing a civilian judge with a military office just because the latter will brave threats won't solve the entire problem. What about the investigation, prosecution, and operation branches? What if they too are susceptible to threats? As long as holistic reform is missing, it is reasonable to doubt that the military-led courts would achieve any result.

Setting up military tribunals to summarily try suspects or hang them in public won't be of much effect if the militant minds continue to thrive. The funeral of Mehmood, the first one to be put to death after lifting moratorium on death sentence, offers a case study. That a large number of mourners attended his funeral in his ancestral village raises question marks on the purpose of instilling fear through military courts has been served at all.

The very purpose of military courts is to resolve an issue too quickly. However, being quick doesn't entail being just. A comparison can be made with how the United States obtained some confessions through torture. Khalid Sheikh Mohammad, for instance, confessed to his crimes, within minutes of being water-boarded. Yet, doubts linger if any anti-terror milestone was ever achieved from that technique.

Long-term strategy

Countering terrorism, on the other hand, requires a comprehensive,

holistic, long-term strategy without usurping the existing democratic and legal set up.

The anti-terrorism courts can be strengthened, first through working on infrastructure uplifting and capacity building. There is a serious need for criminal justice system reforms in the country especially procedural overhaul. Archaic procedures from 19th century colonial era simply cannot deliver in today's environment, where on the one side, we face serious existential threat due to terrorism, but also an over reaching executive that threatens the concept of a just and fair state.

Meanwhile, the top judges of the country laid down a strategy to expedite the disposal of terrorism cases. The strategy, involving hearing cases on a daily basis and constituting special benches, came in the meeting chaired by Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Nasir-ul-Mulk, and attended by the chief justices of the provincial high courts. This critical decision, however, is overshadowed by the decision of establishing military courts, which made the strategy redundant.

Unfortunately, despite passing of a considerable time since December 16th 2014, no steps have been taken by the government or any other organ of the state to reform the criminal justice system which is crying out for a meaningful overhaul.

NACTA, nay activated

*Tariq Parvez**

*Tariq Parvez served as the founding National Coordinator of NACTA (2008-2010) and as Director General of Federal Investigation Agency (2005-2008).

One had thought that the horrific terrorist attack on Army Public School in Peshawar in December 2014 would evoke a robust response. Much hope was pinned on the National Action Plan, a list of actions the government announced to fight terrorism in the country.¹ Not least, because the National Counter Terrorism Authority [NACTA], is often taken as a coordinating point of all steps of NAP.²

This was a decision of fundamental nature for integrating and orchestrating the national counter terrorism effort. Unfortunately, NACTA has been in the news mostly for its dormancy than any activity. Making it the prime national coordinating body for counter terrorism, means activating it first (one of the points of the National Action Plan).

For a while, it looked so. After the APS tragedy, Prime Minister Sharif shared strong desire of making NACTA functional.³ On December 31st, 2014, the interior minister, after chairing a meeting of the NACTA, too claimed that from then onwards, NACTA had been revitalized and made fully operational.⁴

But six months down the road, the reality doesn't differ. Except for the military not letting us forget the attack, the old official line has been treaded. In fact, if there is anything that reflects the government's lack of seriousness on strategizing against militants, it is the progress, or lack of it, on NACTA.

Is NACTA needed?

A great need has long been felt for a focal institution at the federal level, to plan, coordinate and orchestrate counter-terrorism efforts. Post 9/11, the national counter terrorism effort in Pakistan was fragmented, with no coordination between the provinces and the federal government, the military and the civilian agencies and different federal ministries having a role in counter terrorism. This lack of unity of effort between different stakeholders weakened the national response.

In January 2009, National Counter-Terrorism Authority, known by its acronym NACTA, was set up precisely to fill that need: to coordinate efforts of all counter-terror stakeholders, civilian and military alike; and to address all dimensions of the terrorist threat.

¹*Dawn*, Islamabad, December 27, 2014.

²The new National Coordinator of NACTA said that turning it into a coordinating body is among his top priorities.

³ "PM sets NACTA in motion, forms 16 committees for NAP," *Pakistan Today*, December 28, 2014.

⁴"Nisar orders immediate execution of death row terrorists," *Daily Times*, January 1, 2015.

Four years later, in 2013, a law was passed to give NACTA a legal status, assigning it the following seven functions:

1. To receive, collate and disseminate intelligence on terrorism and to issue periodical threat assessments for use by stakeholders.
2. To prepare National Counter Terrorism and Extremism Strategies and review progress in their implementation on a periodical basis.
3. To develop action plans against terrorism and extremism and submit progress on implementation of these plans on a periodical basis
4. To carry out research in areas relevant to terrorism and extremism and to share the research with stakeholders.
5. To carry out liaison with international entities for cooperating in counter terrorism and extremism.
6. To review relevant laws and suggest amendments to the Federal Government.
7. To appoint committees of experts from government and non-government sectors for deliberating in areas relating to the functions and mandate of NACTA.⁵

The organization's coordinating role was reiterated after the APS school attack. In December 2014, the Interior minister specified that "the point of coordinating" all the steps of National Action Plan would be NACTA.

Reviewing NACTA

The issue with NACTA has less to do with its mandate, and more with its working. That is why NAP too calls for "revival" of NACTA, a body whose coordinating role seems to be well-taken. Similar statements were made by Prime Minister and Interior Minister, discussed above.

Whatever little is known about NACTA's revival trickles through media reports. The government has, on the other hand, hardly shared any information on the performance of NACTA, probably because there is little to share.

• *Management*

Six months after APS school attack, NACTA still suffers from the same institutional inattention that had rendered it useless in the first place.

First of all, to date, there remains confusion whether NACTA comes under the Prime Minister or the Federal Interior Minister. The turf war dates back to its genesis in 2009, when opinion was divided on which

⁵Section 4 of NACTA Act, 2013.

office should look after it; the decision was finally made in favour of the Prime Minister's Office.

But sometimes later, NACTA was placed under the interior minister. For quite some time, it looked that while the administrative function of NACTA is with interior ministry, the operation functions rest with the PM's Office. This sounded like duality of offices.

In 2013, the Supreme Court of Pakistan asked the government to revert the notification that put NACTA under the interior ministry, bringing it again under the PM. Yet, there seems little action on that order, as interior ministry continues to speak on behalf of the NACTA.

Secondly, to date, not a single meeting of the Board of Governors of NACTA has been held, not even after the NAP was announced in December 2014. This despite the fact that Section 6 of NACTA Act, 2013, mandates the Board to meet at least once in each quarter of a year.

The Board of Governors is the most important component of its management. Headed by the Prime Minister, the BoG includes top public office holders from all over the country, including chief ministers of the four provinces.⁶

The Board has four functions i.e. exercising all the powers and

functions of the NACTA; providing it strategic vision and overseeing its activities; recommending rules, policies, or manuals to carry out the purposes of NACTA Act; and approving the annual budget prepared by the NACTA.

Without convening the board meeting, efforts to make NACTA functional will fall flat.

Thirdly, no Board meeting means no strategic guidance and no operational directions of the Executive Committee to follow on.

Headed by the Interior Minister, the Executive Committee is the second component of NACTA, responsible for ensuring effective implementation of the decisions of the Board, and performing other such functions as are assigned to it by the Board.

Some two weeks after the APS school attack, the NACTA Executive Committee met. That was December 31st 2014. Since then, no other such meeting took place.

In any case, without prior Board sitting, the meeting of Executive Committee of NACTA may lack legal standing. The EC, after all, is supposed to implement the directives of the Board.

⁶Section 5 of NACTA Act.

Finally, the present head of NACTA, known as National Coordinator, is powerless.

National Coordinator is the most crucial component of NACTA management, delegated with nine functions including full administrative and financial powers for effective administration of the Authority.

These powers, however, are to be approved by the Board. Again, without Board meeting, the NC's powers are unclear, begging a simple question: how can an organization be made functional if its head lacks powers of hiring people or spending budget?

Amusingly, in what is typical of the bureaucratic mind set, an organization without any functional headquarters of its own is asking for regional offices. The Interior Ministry even sent to the Prime Minister summary requesting approval for regional offices of NACTA. Again, nothing has been heard about that summary, too.

- *Tasks*

At the end of the Executive Committee meeting on December 31st, the interior minister shared that NACTA will undertake two key tasks. One, it will set up a helpline, numbered 1717, for citizens to share any information on terrorist threat. And two, NACTA will frame recommendations for the Prime

Minister on how to implement National Action Plan. Progress on both ends is far from satisfactory.

For one, the decision of setting up helpline doesn't fit in the role of NACTA. Setting up helplines is the responsibility of law-enforcement bodies like police or paramilitary force, which operates on ground level. An organization like NACTA, on other hand, works at the strategic tier.

More so, the lifeline of the helpline seems doomed. On February 6th, almost two months after the helpline was set up, the Interior Minister briefed the Prime Minister that the helpline had received 161 calls. Nothing is known about the calls received after that briefing. Apparently, the government seemed more interested in seen to be doing something than doing it.

As of the second decision of the Executive Committee, about sending recommendations to the Prime Minister about how best to implement NAP, no progress has been reported.

- *Budget*

Many speculated that post-APS attack, the government will allocate significant chunk to NACTA. After all, budgets of any institution clearly reflect its value: the higher the budget, the greater the importance accorded to it.

That turned out to be wishful thinking. In the fiscal year 2015-16, no special budget is allocated for NACTA, a fact also conceded by the finance secretary. The finance minister argued that NACTA's budget has been included in the interior ministry's budget.⁷ This probably has been the day-to-day cost of running NACTA. What NACTA has been demanding over the years, is special fund to activate it.

A senior interior ministry official was quoted as saying that 960 million rupees were required for making NACTA functional and that they were carrying out negotiations with the finance officials to get this amount allocated to NACTA.⁸

- *Human resources*

More than six months after announcement of NAP, the working strength of NACTA largely remains the same, raising questions whether the prime minister is too weak or too non-serious, to have NAP implemented.

According to an interior ministry official, who did not want to be named, NACTA has 206 sanctioned posts, out of which only 60 posts are filled up. This means NACTA is working on 29 per cent of sanctioned

strength, as 71 percent posts stay vacant.

What is of greater concern is the difference between the number of officers and non-officers: out of the 60 filled posts, 50 are non-officers (clerks, naib qasids, etc.); only 10 are officers (grade 17 to 22), against their sanctioned strength of 34.

The senior management of NACTA, meant to activate it, is in even worse shape. Out of 12 posts of grade 20 to grade 22, including the head of NACTA, only one is filled up – that of the head.⁹ The remaining eleven, four members and seven directors general, who are supposed to help the NC in running NACTA, are yet to be appointed.

Way forward

Six years after its genesis, and six months after the APS tragedy, the much-needed NACTA is still an ineffective organization, or, in the words of interior secretary, a "paper tiger." It has yet to be properly revived.

To activate NACTA, the government may well follow NACTA Act, which neatly lays down the working procedures of this body.

Of foremost importance is convening a meeting of NACTA's Board of

⁷"Billions for counter-terrorism, nothing for Nacta," *Express Tribune*, June 7, 2015.

⁸Ibid.

⁹"NACTA needs men and money to fight terrorism" *The News*, March 11, 2015.

Governors. Without such a meeting, NACTA's actualization will remain mere rhetoric. The meeting, on the other hand, will automatically set the path of its revival. The board's meeting will not only gather the country's top office holders to brainstorm on security threats, but also assign the much-desired powers to the organization's head, alongside approving NACTA's budget without routing it through the interior ministry.

Hate speech and restricted speech: striking a balance

*Marvi Sirmed**

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The twenty-point National Action Plan, announced in the wake of Peshawar school attack, carries almost all aspects of countering terrorism, ranging from the all-out violence to extremism/radicalisation.

Much of the news about NAP these days revolves around the issues having short-term significance like special courts and military operation. The issues having impact beyond today are missed out. For example, issues of extremism and radicalisation that lie at the core of the problem of terrorism, are reflected negligibly when it comes to the action on ground.

This article intends to detangle NAP's provision number 5, i.e., countering hate speech and extremist materials.

Hating the "hate speech"

Hate speech is more or less defined as any speech that attacks a person or group on the basis of attributes such

as gender, ethnic origin, religion, race, disability, sexual orientation etc.¹

Hate speakers push societies and states towards devastation. The last century is stained with several marks of genocides – Holocaust, for instance – a process hastened by hate speeches.²

The menace of global terrorism is often attributed to hate speech and radicalisation, among other factors.³ According to several studies on post-9/11 terrorism, hate speech mostly produces hate crime, which is often precursor to terrorism.

There is a reason why it is so, especially in the context of Pakistan. Terrorism is graduated upon the hate crimes of right-wing forces, indicating a build-up of anti-minority sentiments.⁴

It is thus absolutely urgent for a country like Pakistan to constrict the flow of terrorist ideologies. This can be achieved by breaking the

¹ John T. Nockleby, "Hate speech," in Encyclopedia of the American Constitution, ed. Leonard W. Levy and Kenneth L. Karst, vol. 3, 2nd edition (Detroit: Macmillan Reference US, 2000), 1277-1279, quoted in Margaret Brown-Sica and Jeffrey Beall, "Library 2.0 and the Problem of Hate Speech," *Electronic Journal of Academic and Special Librarianship* 1, no. 2 (Summer 2008).

² "Countering dangerous speech, protecting free speech: practical strategies to prevent genocide" (Report of

the 2014 Sudikoff Annual Interdisciplinary Seminar), <http://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20150512-sudikoff-report.pdf> (accessed August 18, 2015).

³ Kathleen Deloughery, Ryan D. King and Victor Asal, "Close cousins or distant relatives? The relationship between terrorism and hate crime," *Crime and Delinquency*, <http://cad.sagepub.com/content/58/5/663> (accessed August 18, 2015).

⁴ Ibid

fountainhead – the hate speech/extremist material. The fifth point of NAP rightly calls for countering hate speech and extremism material.

Existing codes

Even though hate speech is not definitively defined or enshrined in international law, there are provisions that identify expressions considered as hate speech. These provisions serve as bulwark against the spread of hate speech.

The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide criminalizes “direct and public incitement to commit genocide”. Likewise, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) asks states to criminalize “all dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or racial hatred as well as incitement to racial discrimination.”⁵

Another prominent covenant is the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which asks states that “any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.”

Soon after Pakistan ratified the ICCPR in 2009, a debate started in the parliament as to how can the country’s laws be amended in compliance to the ICCPR.

It emerged that the existing Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) quite rigorously covers those offences that can be distinguished as “hate speech”.

Take Section 153-A (a), for instance. It criminalises anyone who “by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representations or otherwise, promotes or incites or attempts to promote and incite disharmony, enmity, hatred or ill-will between different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities, on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, caste or community or any other ground whatsoever.”⁶

Similarly, Section 153-A (B), punishes anyone who “commits, or incites any other person to commit, any act which is prejudicial to the maintenance of harmony between different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities or any group of persons identifiable as such on any ground

⁵ Dr. Tarlach McGonagle, “The Council of Europe against online hate speech: Conundrums and challenges,” Institute for Information Law (IViR),

<http://www.ivir.nl/publicaties/download/1088> (accessed August 18, 2015).

⁶ Pakistan Penal Code, (XLV OF1860) [6th October, 1860].

whatsoever and which disturbs or is likely to disturb public tranquillity.”⁷

Thus, the existing legal framework gives the state enough space to go after the miscreants. What is rather needed is that the law-enforcement agencies must be trained and given resources to track and handle hate-based crimes. That data should be publicly made available for continued public scrutiny.

Drawing line

From the human rights perspective, it is not always advisable to have watertight provisions of law in the name of hate speech, which the state may invoke to limit citizens’ right to free expression.

In Pakistan’s peculiar context, with a chequered history of democracy and democratic struggle, the dictatorial regimes as well as intermittent civilian governments have tried to clamp down people’s right to expression. Legitimate concerns of human rights defenders and overall civil society representatives about the civil-military relations have been

traditionally seen by the state with the lens of treason and infidelity.

Stringent and tight laws targeting hate-speech, hence, can be easily used by regimes for snubbing dissent and criticism in the name of hate-speech.

This struggle between human rights defenders opposing hate-speech laws and counter-terrorism communities lobbying for such laws is fairly global and not limited to Pakistan.⁸

While scholars deem free speech as inalienable right of the individual, an overwhelming majority of them limit free speech at a certain point, where it offends communities and individuals through a variety of expressions, which endangers them.⁹

In Pakistan, the free speech vs. hate speech debate is reflected in some contradicting laws. Resultantly, one law in certain cases limits or completely cancels the other laws that may provide relief to the powerless communities.

For instance, the provisions, which penalize enmity between groups

⁷ Ibid

⁸ William Saletan, “Hate-speech hypocrites: How can we ban hate speech against Jews while not Muslims?,” *Slate*, September 28, 2012.

⁹ Natan Lerner, “Is there a right to hate speech,” *The Human Rights Brief* (The Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, Washington College

of Law)3, no. 2 (1996): 41; Sandra Coliver, “striking a balance: Hate speech, freedom of expression and non-discrimination,” Human Rights Center, University of Sussex, <https://www.article19.org/data/files/pdfs/publications/striking-a-balance.pdf> (accessed August 18, 2015).

(like 153-A of PPC, as discussed) and those that criminalize blasphemy (295 and 298 of PPC) sometimes go together, but at other instances, collide with each other. The speeches and sermons of a section of religious leaders against other religious communities, for example, Ahmadis, would be prohibited by Section 153-A, on grounds of enmity, but protected by Section 298, on grounds of blasphemy, and by other freedom of speech provisions of the Constitution.

Additionally, Pakistan's numerous social fissures, based on religion, sect, ethnicity, political ideology and social status, thrive on hate speech and extremist material. It is the friction underlining these fissures that ends up producing foot soldiers whose hatred gradually morphs into violent extremism and, in extreme cases, to terrorism.

In such a situation, countering hate speech might not be too easy, or even practical, at times. Touching the historical sectarian baggage might prove to be a hornet's nest, for instance.

That said, such limitations do not stop the governments from enforcing the basic principles of a pluralist – if not secular – society, one that truly appreciates rights and freedom of

everyone, irrespective of their backgrounds.

Progress under NAP

Implementation mechanism

On December 26th, 2014, two days after NAP was announced, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif constituted subcommittees for implementing it at different points.¹⁰ The same day, the subcommittee on “countering hate speech and extremist material” was formed and assigned to the interior minister.

The committee's other members were ministers of religious affairs, planning and development, information and broadcasting; director generals of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and Intelligence Bureau (IB); Managing Director of Pakistan Television; all provincial Home Secretaries; Secretaries of provincial Auqaf Departments; National Coordinator of NACTA; and Secretary of Interior Division.¹¹

This committee was tasked to furnish recommendations within the next three days, that is, by December 29th, 2015. The deadline was perhaps missed. That is why the committee was tasked to come up with a comprehensive strategy by January 15th, 2015.¹² Again, the Ministry failed

¹⁰ “PM finalizes panel for ensuring implementation of National Action Plan,” *Express Tribune*, December 27, 2014.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² “Govt combating terror – one meeting at a time,” *Pakistan Today*, December 31, 2014.

to meet the deadline.¹³ Whether or not the strategy was submitted at all is unclear. At least publicly, no material was released.

Strategy

The government's strategy of combating hate speech/extremist material can be deduced from the periodic reviews the ministry submitted to the Prime Minister after every few months.

That strategy involves two-pronged measures: regulating public order and checking systemic dissemination of hate material.

Many hate speakers have been arrested and shops closed, according to government circles. By mid-January, for instance, 251 people were arrested for hate speech, rising to 1,799 by the end of July, government's progress reports in those two months show.¹⁴¹⁵¹⁶

Numbers, however, could be deceptive. Despite the overdrive to arrest hate speakers, the loud-

mouthed sectarian leaders stay untouched.

Most of the arrests have been made for misusing loud speakers or sound amplifiers, under a 1965 law regulating their usage.¹⁷ The administration has reportedly clamped down on public use of loudspeakers albeit selectively. According to the January report, 1,100 people were arrested for misusing loudspeakers.¹⁸ Many non-hate-speakers were also arrested for violating the law. For example, the recent arrests in Islamabad were made on loudspeaker violations when human rights defenders protested the demolition of an informal settlement in I-11 sector of Islamabad.

In an exclusive interview with the author, a senior member of ruling PML-N Sheikh Waqas Akram, who has been at the forefront in snubbing sectarian terrorist outfits in his own constituency in district Jhang, discussed other angles of these arrests.¹⁹ Shia and Barelvis, he observed, have been main targets of the arrests for violating act related to loudspeaker usage. He detangles this

¹³ "Govt misses four deadlines set for NAP," *Pakistan Today*, January 25, 2015.

¹⁴ "251 arrested for hate speech, NAP meeting informed," *Dawn*, January 14, 2015.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ "Over 20,000 terrorists killed after NAP implementation," Geo TV (website), July 30, 2015.

¹⁷ "Regulation and Control of Loud Speakers and Sound Amplifiers Ordinance 1965.

¹⁸ "251 arrested for hate speech, NAP meeting informed," *Dawn*, January 14, 2015.

¹⁹ Author's interview with Sheikh Waqas Akram.

trend as the weakness of law-enforcing agencies (LEA) to carry out an all-out campaign against the more powerful mosques being run by the *takfiri* schools of thought, who are main culprits of hate-speech against other sects and religions. The LEAs try, Mr. Waqas said, to balance the small number of the arrests of real problem makers by arresting the clerics of other sects, who are largely the victims of the hate campaigns run by the aggressive elements of puritanical Deobandi clerics.

Mechanism for identifying and curbing by taking appropriate punitive measures on hate speech/extremist material in digital realm, too, has not been developed so far. There isn't even a proper platform to which people can file complaints and seek redress. The government has rather been emphasizing too much on curbing and censoring speech. Even a controversial cybercrime law is being proposed, to the resistance of opposition parties and rights activists.

Another missing aspect is a clear stance against the hate-mongering pulpit. A certain section of mosque elite relay hate during religiously-ordained days. Friday is one of them, when sermons before collective prayer are deliberately titled along

sectarian lines. Yet, the state doesn't seem to be taking on against them. And they continue with their hatred.

Overall, there is little scrutiny of the entire process of NAP, including on hate speech/extremist material, by the citizens and parliament.

Immunization campaign - needed

The government's strategy of fighting hate speech/extremist material can be classified as "restrictive" in nature, one of the two approaches of countering hate speech.²⁰ This approach mainly targets the hate-speaker, the materials and the means of dissemination of those materials.

This approach has its costs too, as it can end up tramping the right to free speech and freedom of expression as explained above under the section, 'Drawing Line'. Some critics even warn that this approach has the potential of pitching the governments against the citizens if people's right to dissent is violated. In such cases, the governments may find themselves at an adversarial position with their citizens. Killing the dissent is dangerous for the societies infested with radicalisation and hate-speech otherwise too,

²⁰"Countering dangerous speech, protecting free speech: practical strategies to prevent genocide" (Report of the 2014 Sudikoff Annual

Interdisciplinary Seminar), <http://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20150512-sudikoff-report.pdf> (accessed August 18, 2015).

because it is one strong tool against the prevalent hate-speech.²¹

There is another approach too, the non-restrictive one, which reaches out to the audience of hate speech by preventing them from being receptive to the speech. Under this approach, the state undertakes rigorous 'immunisation' of the populace against hate messages.²² Non-restrictive method is akin to polio immunisation campaign. Even though the polio virus stays around, the people turn resistant to it.

The most suitable course of action would be to follow a careful mix of both approaches – restrict and non-restrictive – without snatching any rights from the people that the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan has guaranteed.

This careful mixture of both approaches might involve some degree of regulation for the religious sermons and speeches as well as standardisation of madrassa curriculum. Although it is against secular ideals that the state intervenes in the affairs related to religion, it nevertheless could be followed dispassionately for checking inter and intra religious hate-speech.

Strong libel laws can be one measure for restricting political and religious leaders from accusatory hate speech

against the opponents. This would water down their otherwise fiery and offensive speeches during political rallies and religious congregations in addition to neutralising the existing incentive to misuse the blasphemy laws.

One innovative measure under non-restrictive approach could be a 'Hate Speech Immunisation Program' across the country. This program, while working through different platforms, should follow Zero-Tolerance policy for stereotypes and biased description of or attitude towards different religious, sectarian, ethnic communities and women. Programs like this are usually aimed at increasing people's resistance to the hate-speech by mainly three broad measures. These include; (1) reforming educational system that focuses inculcating habits of critical thinking and healthy scepticism among the pupils; (2) enabling the populace to empathise for the vulnerable communities and groups as well as adopting and propagating pluralist values; (3) encouraging and inspiring the citizens to speak out on injustices and voice dissent whenever they have to.

Under such a program, teachers of all educational levels, especially at the primary level and in madrassa, may be engaged on de-radicalisation and anti-hate-speech training programs. Moreover, mega programs using film, TV, radio, social media,

²¹Ibid.

²² Ibid

newspapers and other non-conventional media should be launched, to 'inoculate' the populace strong resistance against all kinds of messages based on hate and prejudice. Likewise, curriculum of regular educational institutions needs to be thoroughly reviewed and revised in consultation and collaboration with progressive sections of civil society.

Of course, the state must not make use of radical ideologies, prejudiced messages and hate speech and materials for its own strategic ends. This might serve some short-term interests but in medium to long term, it proves lethal for the country

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Terrorism financing

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Pakistan's counter terrorism (CT) efforts often revolve around intelligence gathering, followed by policing, and, in many cases, undercover intelligence-led operations. These are no doubt integral CT components. But for counter-terror efforts to be effective in the longer term, the approach should be multipronged, also focusing on funding of terrorist activities.

An important CT activity, therefore, is denting the militant economy, through all possible ways: tracing the financial mechanisms of funding used by militants, neutralizing those sources, and preventing banned outfits from raising funds domestically or internationally.

This element has received relatively little attention in Pakistan, for a variety of reasons like general lack of expertise in financial crime, and lack of appreciation of the intricacies of the militant economy.

As of now, there is little public information on what is actually being done to clamp down on terrorism financing by the government.

Uncertain estimates

The magnitude of funds generated for terrorism is highly uncertain, and there is little information on the shares of different forms of funding in the total.

Terrorism in Pakistan is often believed to be financed mainly through the proceeds of crime such as bank robberies, kidnapping for ransom, smuggling of timber and antiquities, dealing in opium and heroin, and relatively minor offences like extortion. Besides, funds are also channelled to extremist organisations in the name of charity.

Not all proceeds of crime fund terrorism, and similarly, terrorism is financed by other means also. Controlling crime would help choke terrorism financing somewhat – but not completely. However, there will be overlaps between criminal networks and terrorist networks, and crackdowns on both are required.

An understanding of the sources and estimates of terrorism financing in Pakistan requires understanding of the size of illegal economy in Pakistan. Again, literature on that subject is limited.

The UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in a comprehensive report on non-bank based transactions in Pakistan, briefly

discusses how the proceeds of crime are routed through such systems.¹

Another study, by a Pakistani think-tank Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), tried to estimate earnings in Pakistan from crime, mainly drug trade, migrant smuggling, and kidnapping for ransom.² An exact linkage between crime earnings and terrorist financing is, however, missing. Yet another recent paper alludes toward smuggling of heroin, opium, and cannabis; again, the study suggests that these might be financing terrorism.³

When it comes to the geographical sources of terrorism, a significant share of the financing of terrorism in Pakistan is also thought to emanate from overseas, either in the form of donations to “charitable” organizations which are believed to divert funds to militant groups, or through direct donations to such groups.

Targeting IVTS

Over the last decade, Pakistan has been under increasing pressure from the international community to crack down on the transfer of funds

through Informal Value Transfer Systems (IVTSs) or non-bank based transactions.

Initially the authorities were reluctant to impose stringent controls on informal systems of money transfer, as the bulk of usage of such systems was thought to lie with unskilled or semi-skilled overseas workers who use the systems to send money to families in small towns, villages, and other remote areas of the country which are not serviced by formal financial institutions. The ease of use of such systems (which do not require extensive paperwork, and are highly responsive to the requirements of users) made them a natural choice for the low-skilled diaspora. In addition, the systems are known to be in the use of small scale traders, who use them to settle accounts with overseas counterparts.

Although illegal, the use of IVTSs for such transactions is difficult to control in a country where only about 14 per cent of adults have access to a formal financial institution (WB 2009).

Many of those sending money through IVTS may not have much to do with terrorism financing. Nevertheless, the need to check the

¹ “Hawala and Hundi in Pakistan: Development and Justice Approaches,” December 2009.

²SDPI, *Examining the dimensions, scale and dynamics of the illegal economy: a*

study of Pakistan in the region (Islamabad: SDPI, 2011).

³ Safiya Aftab, “Post 2014: The Regional Drug Economy and Its Implications for Pakistan,” Barcelona Center for International Affairs, February 2014.

more pernicious uses of IVTSs, particularly to the extent that these systems are used to transmit the proceeds of crime, remains very much an issue.

While monitoring IVTSs is recommended, the proceeds of crime are also often transmitted by manipulating international commercial transactions. The best criminal minds use formal systems for illegal activity. For instance, licit trade through registered businesses is mixed with illicit transactions to create some form of a paper trail and obscure the source of funds.

Tracing such deals requires sophisticated data analysis and close monitoring of trade and payment systems – skills which are in short supply.

Zero conviction

Post-9/11, states were under increasing pressure to check terrorism and the flow of funds to militant groups. The Security Council Resolution 1373, adopted unanimously on September 28th, 2001, requires all member states to prepare or amend laws to criminalize terrorist acts and ratify the then existing international conventions on terrorism, including the 1999 International Convention for the Suppression of Financing of Terrorism. Pakistan acceded to this

Convention in June 2009, with some conditions.

While Resolution 1373 was specific to Al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban, a later resolution, number 1566, adopted in October 2004, defined terrorism more clearly as “criminal acts” committed to, among other things, “provoke a state of terror in the general public”.⁴ Following this, the UN states are in the process of negotiating a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.

As the international community’s focus on terrorism increased, and Pakistan’s own security situation continued to worsen post 2002, the government responded by setting up a regulatory and institutional framework to check money laundering and terrorist financing.

The key legislation to this end is the Anti-Money Laundering (AML) Act of 2010, which created the institutional structure and provided the legislative basis for monitoring financial systems to detect money laundering and prosecute offenders. The definition of money laundering is narrow, bringing into net someone who sells and purchases property developed from criminal earnings, conceals its owner, or holds it for someone.

⁴ United Nations S/RES/1566 (2004) Security Council Distr.: General 8

October 2004 04-54282 (E) *0454282* Resolution 1566 (2004).

Clearly, the Act largely focuses on the unregulated real estate market, which often thrives on criminal proceeds. But the Act does not define money laundering in broader terms. For one, it does not review terrorism at all. Preventing money laundering, instead of combating terrorism is the primary mandate of AML-related authorities. If the regulation is able to stem terrorist financing, it is an added bonus, not the main objective.

last year, in the wake of the Peshawar attack.

It was this Act that established the Financial Monitoring Unit (FMU) at the State Bank to counter money launderers and terrorism financiers. To do so, the FMU has been asked to specify procedures for financial transactions and report authorities about suspicious transactions. However, the FMU doesn't have the authority to take action against offenders. It is required to forward information to investigation agencies such as the Federal Investigation Agency, to investigate and prosecute the offenders.

Another important legislation, the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997, amended in 2013, criminalizes handling of terrorist property, due to which terrorist financing like funds transfer can be dealt with in the Anti-Terrorism Court.

Despite these measures, there have been few convictions for money laundering, and none for terrorist financing in Pakistan. The situation has hardly changed ever since the National Action Plan was announced

Instead, Pakistan continues to appear on an international list of those countries that are required to do more to regulate money laundering and terrorist financing. The list is prepared by the inter-government Financial Action Task Force, which tracks countries on their obligations to fulfil international requirements on regulating money laundering and terror funding.

As of now, the government's steps on choking terror financing have far from advanced. Most of the activity has consisted of banning certain groups and freezing their accounts.

These measures are, however, are not enough.

As a starting point, the government needs to understand how the on-going militancy in the country is being financed. Such investigation requires significant investment of time and resources, including training and hiring of qualified personnel.

Stopping the banned groups

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While the NAP lays down a comprehensive framework for combating the entire spectrum of the terrorist threat in Pakistan, its seventh point calls for taking steps against “re-emergence of banned militant organizations.”

Clampdown

Almost immediately after NAP was released in January, a spurt of activity followed. Sub committees headed by federal ministers to monitor each point of the plan, were set up, though nothing has been heard about them afterwards. On January 16th, 2015, interior minister clarified government’s intention of choking the funding sources of banned outfits along with acting against their propagation of hate ideology. These, it was meant, would prevent re-emergence of banned organizations.

In the first couple of months after the NAP was announced, provincial police carried out a number of raids against those disseminating, selling or printing material of the banned groups. Reportedly, some of their members collecting funds were also arrested. For instance, a report submitted by Additional Advocate General of Punjab stated that Punjab’s Counter-Terrorism Department had arrested a gang of 12

people found collecting funds for Jaish-e-Muhammad and Al-Rehmat Trust, and confiscated ‘jihadi’ literature and receipt books.¹

Reports of arrest often trickle in media. For instance, in July 2015, 13 persons were reportedly arrested in Punjab for collecting donations for banned outfits.²

The government insists it arrested a large number of supporters of banned outfits, recovered their printed material, and disrupted their sources of funding. According to the ministry of interior statement submitted to the Supreme Court on fourth July, a total of 60,420 individuals had been arrested in 54,376 search operations, under NAP.³

But overall, the government has so far been reluctant to share consolidated countrywide figures on the action taken against the banned outfits. As of today, little is known about all those arrested. Were they convicted, or as in most criminal cases, acquitted? This further dilutes the impact of the whole effort against banned organizations.

Although there is a need to have such an action on a sustained basis, one rarely hears about such raids these days. The clampdown, however,

¹Nasir Iqbal, “Banned outfits collecting funds booked, Punjab tells SC,” *Dawn*, July 30, 2015.

²*Dawn*, Islamabad, July 5, 2015.

³“Ministry to submit NAP report to apex court,” *Dawn*, July 5, 2015.

didn't go beyond a couple of months after NAP.

The effectiveness of the arrests the government claims is yet to be evaluated. Some banned outfits, like the Ahl-e-Sunnat Wal Jamaat, despite arrests, still carry out public meetings and protest demonstrations. These contradictions make people perceive as if the arrests were more for appearing to be doing something rather than effectively deterring members of banned militant outfits.

Proscribing organizations

Modern-day terrorism generally involves group work. Individuals, who carry out terrorist acts, like suicide bombing, are part of organizations, which plot those acts. Even the "lone wolf" attackers draw inspiration, and sometimes attack plan, from organizations they follow. Organizations sponsor violence: identify enemies, recruit individuals, train them, equip them, chart attacks, and claim those attacks.

Hitting at terror outfits would therefore be essential in any counter-terror strategy.

The UN Security Council Resolution 1267 provides for banning militant entities and militant leaders, supporting Al Qaeda and Taliban. UN's ban procedure has two dimensions: it maintains lists of banned entities as well as their leaders, and it monitors

implementation of the ban by a dedicated body of terrorism experts.

United Kingdom and the United States also maintain similar lists, of banned organizations and specified individuals of these organizations, including those the UNSC has already banned. Both countries also have specified bodies to monitor implementation of these bans.

Like other countries, Pakistan also maintains its own list. Moreover, Pakistan is legally bound to follow the resolution. Theoretically, therefore, Pakistan is bound to follow action on groups mentioned in the UN's list as well as the country's own list.

Inside the country, Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) provides the legal framework for proscribing terrorist organizations as well as preventing their re-emergence in any form.

Two of its clauses are worth noting: Section 11-B of the ATA empowers the government to proscribe an organization involved in terrorism. And Section 11-EE, inserted in 2013, states that if office bearers of any banned outfit form a new outfit under a different government, the federal government may, upon suspicion, of their involvement in terrorist activities, proscribe the new outfit as well. Thus, banning a reincarnated outfit requires less evidence than an outfit for the first time.

Once an organization is banned, its infrastructure is to be sealed, activities prohibited, and members to be monitored. Thus, a banned outfit will be unable to, say, open bank account, or publish material, or hold public meetings.

People associated with the banned groups are automatically enlisted under the Fourth Schedule of the ATA. Such persons cannot move or act around easily and they are supposed to fill with the police bail bonds for good behaviour.

On ground, however, these constraints on members of banned organizations are not enforced strictly by the respective police forces. Interviews with police officers revealed that in a significant number of cases, the persons on the list have not provided the bail bonds for good behaviour as required.

Because policing is a provincial subject, each province maintains its own list of Fourth Schedulers. The provincial lists of those on Fourth Schedule be consolidate into one national list, regularly updated and be shared with all stakeholders to implement the constraints imposed by the ATA.

After the NAP was announced, the interior minister stated that a databank and monitoring network

were being established for all the proscribed organizations so that “their resurgence secretly or under different names could be shut down”.⁴ Outfits once banned change their name to continue operation, as discussed elsewhere in this essay. Yet, until now, nothing is heard of the database.

Rather strikingly, the government hasn’t even released list of banned outfits. Not that the list doesn’t exist; it was rather taken off from the NACTA website in January 2015, almost a month after the announcement of NAP, which is supposed to fight terrorism.⁵ How can a government reluctant to publicly share the list of proscribed organizations, be expected to seriously implement the ban?

The public cannot be expected to stay away from a group they are not sure is among the banned ones. Once the list is shared, many will turn away from those on it. At the same time, more hard evidence may be publicly shared to enhance the legitimacy of the ban in the eyes of the public.

The interior ministry, responsible for enforcing ATA, in assistance from federal intelligence agencies, is expected to maintain lists of office bearers of banned organizations and share them with relevant subordinate department like arms-issuing

⁴ “Nisar orders blocking of bank accounts linked to banned organizations,” *Dawn*, Jan 16, 2015.

⁵ “NACTA removes list of banned outfits from website,” *The Nation*, January 25, 2015.

authorities, passport office, and immigration department; and other relevant institutes like ministry of finance and State Bank of Pakistan. This way, the ministry can bar active members of banned outfits from traveling, deny them passports, revoke their arms, and withdraw them financial services.

Provincial police departments are supposed to monitor the day-to-day activities of the members of the proscribed organizations and to take legal action when necessary. Similarly, the provincial home departments are supposed to cancel the arms licenses issued to the members of proscribed organizations and ask them to deposit their weapons in the police stations. Again, having a widely-distributed list is must for these departments, like local policemen, to know whom to follow and whom to leave.

“Re-emergence”

Key issues dealing with banned outfits in Pakistan have as much to do with banning them as ensuring they are not revived. That is why, NAP in specific asks for stopping the “re-emergence” of banned outfits.

In 2013, the government claims to have banned sixty organizations

under the Anti-Terrorism Act.⁶ Yet, even after being banned, these outfits carry out with their activities, according to a widespread perception among security analysts and ground reports of journalists.

Some groups changed their names, continuing with the same agenda. For instance, a year after Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan was banned in 2002, the group changed its name to Millat-e-Islamia.

Two, outfits continue to operate with the old name, in a clandestine manner; such as Sipah-e-Sahaba aka Ahl-e-Sunnat Wal Jamaat and Jaish-e-Muhammad aka Khudaam e Islam.

Ahl-e-Sunnat Wal Jamaat, continues to operate, often in public limelight, despite being banned in 2012.⁷ ASWJ is considered to be a reincarnate of SSP.

Above all, some internationally proscribed organizations operate in Pakistan where they are not banned. The most pertinent cases are those of two charities, Jamaat-ud-Dawa and Falah-e-Insaniat Foundation. According to the United Nations, which has banned the two groups, they are charity fronts of the militant Lashkar-e-Taiba, already declared terrorist outfit in 2005.⁸ But Pakistani

⁶This list was mentioned in National Internal Security Policy, a counter-terror policy released in 2013.

⁷ Ministry of Interior, *National Internal Security Plan*(Islamabad: 2013), p. 57.

⁸ Details can be seen at: <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/1267.pdf>.

officials disagree. While LeT has been banned since 2002 in Pakistan, the two charity fronts are among the “watch list” only of the proscribed outfits. Their leaders continue to make public, even media, appearance.

When asked about any possible action on JD or FIF, interior minister informed the Senate that the ban on them is unlikely.⁹ Pakistani officials argue that because UN did not share with Pakistan any supporting evidence establishing JuD as LeT-repackaged, they cannot move against the new group. Should Pakistan think that the JD and FIF are unnecessarily blamed, Pakistan can take the case to the UN for a review.

But, Pakistan doesn’t appear to have approached the UN on JD and FIF. Pakistan is bound to follow the resolution. Continuous ambiguity in this regard will only isolate Pakistan from the international effort against terrorism.

The ban on propagation of the ideology of banned organization is nominally effective, if at all. A spot check of their web presence revealed that at least 20 out of the 60 banned outfits have vibrant Internet presence. These include Hizb-e-

Tahrir, members of which disseminate their leaflets in the capital Islamabad, and Ahl-e-Sunnat Wal Jamaat, a sectarian group.¹⁰ Moreover, several banned groups publish their newspapers and magazines on regular basis, including *Al-Qalam* by Jaish-e-Muhammad and *Khilfat-e-Rashida* by ASWJ.

Some banned groups also held processions and demonstrations. In February 2015, just a month after the NAP, the banned ASWJ scheduled a rally in Karachi. When the civil society protested against the gathering, the police, instead of stopping the rally, arrested the handful members of civil society.¹¹ Then, on February 15th, ASWJ staged protests in Islamabad and Karachi, against the targeted killings of the leaders. Islamabad’s protest was in front of the Supreme Court. No action was taken. Yet again, the group launched another protest, on March 5th, Islamabad. This time, they marched from Lal Masjid, site of the 2007 military standoff, to the Parliament House. The protestors were called off after negotiations with the city’s administration and police.¹²

⁹ “JuD unlikely to be banned, Nisar tells Senate,” *The Nation*, July 8, 2015.

¹⁰ For instance, see the websites: <http://www.hizb-pakistan.com> and <http://www.tnfj.org.pk>.

¹¹ “Civil society activists briefly held over anti-ASWJ protest,” *Pakistan Today*, February 5, 2015.

¹² “ASWJ ends protest in Islamabad as police assures to probe workers killings,” *Express Tribune*, March 6, 2015.

These expose the weakness of the government, putting question marks over credibility in claims of taking action against banned outfits.

Comprehensive strategy

A nationwide approach, backed by political will, is required to keep a check on banned outfits.

There is a need to have a proper organization at the federal level to monitor the status of the ban implementation. One such organization could be National Counter-Terrorism Authority (NACTA). It should be strengthened.

To choke the funding of banned outfits, the government should educate the people against donating the groups and enhance the capacity of FIA to detect and investigate cases of terrorist financing.

As a first step, the government has to issue an official list of banned organizations, and also share evidence against these organizations or their members, with the public. Moreover, provincial lists of Fourth Schedule should be consolidated into one list, and followed upon. Those on the list should be denied, as per law, issuance of arms licenses, passports, travel abroad and key banking services besides reducing their movement. For this, the lists have to be shared with the arms licenses issuing authorities at the federal and provincial levels, passport-issuing

authorities, immigration authorities, State Bank of Pakistan and all commercial banks.

The lack of an authentic list leads to ambiguity in response of the government as well as the public. This confusion should be overcome. The lack of authentic lists of banned militant organizations as well as their members, leads to ambiguity in the response of the government as well as the public. For ensuring effective prevention of the re-emergence of banned militant organizations publicizing these lists is an essential pre-requisite.

Establishing a Counter Terrorism Force

*Farhan Zahid**

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Many efforts similar to NAP were made in the past. In May 2014, for instance, the National Internal Security Policy (NISP) 2014-18 was presented, having many features similar to the NAP such as: reforming madrassas, building capacity of security forces, raising anti-terrorist force, enhancing coordination among security agencies, dealing with Afghan refugees, and curbing terrorist financing. But, NISP failed to materialize, not only because of paucity of funds or capacity issues but also because of lack of consensus.¹

NAP, too, wasn't much of a detailed and proper counter-terror strategy document. But, what made it unique from previous efforts has been its foundation on political consensus. Parties across the board, with the exception of some Islamists, supported the document.

One of the points NAP calls for is raising specialized counter-terrorism (CT) force, a befitting response to fill the need of desperate times. Earlier,

NISP called for establishing a similar force by the name of "federal rapid response force".² Today, the two forces are interchangeably mentioned, given that their shared modalities.

Police department occupies a central stage in Pakistani security layer. Policing is a provincial subject in Pakistan, with each province having its separate police. As the country's primary law-enforcement agency, police is the first line of defence. Although NAP doesn't explicitly talk about police, when compared with the NISP, it is evident that police is accorded prime position in the security of the country.

There are 354,221 police personnel serving throughout the country.³ Additionally, there are several paramilitaries responsible for various special tasks ranging from policing the country's border to stopping smuggling.⁴

If this is the case, why do we need a counter-terrorist force?

¹ For a detailed analysis of NISP please see Raza Rumi, "Charting Pakistan's Internal Security Policy," United States Institute of Peace (USIP), <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR368-Charting-Pakistans-Internal-Security-Policy.pdf>.

² Text of National Internal Security Policy document can be seen at www.nacta.pk.

³ Hassan Abbas, "Reforming Pakistan's police and law enforcement Infrastructure: Is it too flawed to Fix?," United States Institute of Peace (USIP), February 2011.

⁴ For example, Frontier Corps, Sindh Rangers, Punjab Rangers, and Levies force.

Answer is simple. A police officer, trained to combat crime, may not have the requisite skills meant to take on terrorists, motivated by ideology and trained in asymmetric warfare.

Terrorists are not casual criminals or defying smugglers. Law-enforcement officers, therefore, need special skill set to investigate terrorist attacks and interrogate suspected terrorists. Terrorism is supposed to be dealt through specialized forces, an offensive counter-terrorist body as well as a defensive anti-terrorist one.⁵ In fact, many countries have raised special police forces with functional specialization for counter- and anti-terrorist operations.⁶

Special forces in Pakistan

In Pakistan, some police department in provinces have counter-terror department, which have been taking on some measures to curb terrorism,

like clamping down on hate speeches and monitoring of hate makers.⁷ Punjab government initially established separate Counter-Terror Departments (CTD) police stations, in Lahore, Multan, Faisalabad, and Rawalpindi, hearing cases of sectarian violence and terrorism, only.

Additionally, all police departments in the four provinces and Islamabad have, on their own, raised special forces, under their respective counter-terror department.

Punjab, for instance, has two special anti-terrorist forces.

The first one is the Elite Police, raised in 1997 amid growing sectarian threat. The Elite Police was tasked to handle several anti-terrorism matters: anti-terrorist operation, anti-hijacking action, denting at sabotage, close protection to VVIPs; security to

⁵ Though the terms anti-terrorism and counter terrorism are interchangeably used by practitioners but technically and academically speaking are different. We may define counter-terrorism as offensive strategies intended to prevent a belligerent, in a broader conflict, from successfully using the tactic of terrorism; and anti-terrorism as defensive [strategies], intended to reduce the chance of an attack using terrorist tactics at specific points, or to reduce the vulnerability of possible targets to such tactics.

⁶Some of the very successful ones are: Germany's *Grenzschutzgruppe 9 der Bundespolizei* GSG-9 (Border Protection

Group-9), France's *Groupe d'Intervention de la Gendarmerie Nationale* GIGN (National Gendarmerie Intervention Group), Israel's Sayeret Matkal (General Staff Reconnaissance Unit), United States' Hostage Rescue Team (HRT) of Federal Bureau of Investigations, United Kingdom's Special Air Service (SAS) and Special Boat Service (SBS) and India's National Security Guards (NSG).

⁷ For details about Fourth Schedule of Anti-Terrorist Act 1997 see section 11EE, <http://www.punjabcode.punjab.gov.pk/public/dr/THE%20ANTI-TERRORISM%20ACT,%201997.doc.pdf>

sensitive government installations. Officers are selected from regular police force for training at the Elite Police Training School (EPTS), Lahore. Since 1997, when it was established to mid-2015, a total of 8,046 police officers have been trained there.⁸

The other one, Counter-Terrorism Force, is established more recently, in 2014, following the release of NISP. Tasked to overcome and dismantle terrorism in the province, CTF personnel are trained at the EPTS, Lahore.⁹ However, they are distinct from the Elite Police. That is why CTF personnel are normally called as "corporals", as opposed to "elite."¹⁰ So far, 1500 CTC corporals in three batches have passed out, after undergoing training by Turkish police. A total of 300 million rupees are being spent for those trainings.¹¹

Other provinces, too, have established special CT force.

Sindh police has established its own elite special force, Special Security Unit (SSU), in 2010, relatively late than others. The SSU caters to the

anti-terrorism needs of Sindh police. This highly-trained force of 3000 personnel looks after the security of VVIPs, special operations against organized crime as well as banned outfits in Karachi and rest of Sindh province. The Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Elite Police Training School, located in the suburbs of Karachi, provides basic training to the SSU's personnel, besides running training wing which builds capacity for regular police officers.¹²

Similarly, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) set up its new special force unit, Counter Terrorism Force (CTF), with an initial strength of 2400 police officers.¹³ A multifunctioning body, the CTF's mandate also allows it to operate as intelligence-gathering agency. The force is trained at a special academy in Hangu. The CTF helps regular police in conducting special operations in nearly all districts of KP.

Balochistan too has a special anti-terror force by the name of the Anti-Terrorist Force (ATF). The ATF currently comprises 900 active-duty officers and 11 wings. It assists

⁸ Official Website of Elite Police Training School:
<http://elitepolice.net/aboutus.htm>,
accessed on 16/6/2015.

⁹ "1500 corporals get in Anti-Terrorism Force," *The Nation*, April 1, 2014.

¹⁰ "Provincial police force: CTD corporals to begin training next week," *Express Tribune*, May 1, 2014.

¹¹ Hassan Naqvi, "Counter Terrorism Force: First batch of corporals to pass out

on Saturday," *Express Tribune*, January 29, 2015.

¹² Official Website of Special Security Unit:
<http://www.ssusindhpolice.gos.pk/careers.htm>.

¹³ Javed Aziz Khan, "KP sets up special anti-terrorist force," *The News International*, November 19, 2013.

regular police in launching operation against the militants, maintaining law and order situations, ensuring security of foreign delegates and VVIPs, and protecting the high security zones in Quetta. However, there is no training facility in Balochistan for the ATF. Instead, its officers are sent to Islamabad's Anti-Terrorist Training School or Lahore's Elite Police Training School. The last batch of ATF officers even received one-month extra training at the Divisional Battle School of Pakistan Army in Quetta, in February 2015¹⁴.

There are several forces with special functional areas, too. For instance, in 2002, Special Investigations Group (SIG) was created at the Federal Investigations Agency (FIA) to investigate cases of terrorism, bank frauds, and forgeries, and to trace informal money transaction.¹⁵

However, all these forces apparently lack coordination of their anti-terrorist efforts. That is why, NAP clearly called for setting up a federal counter-terrorism force.¹⁶

According to preliminary details, the 5000 strong force will work under the federal ministry of defence and deployed in all provinces. Dedicated to fight terrorism, the force would

coordinate with military and civilian intelligence gathering bodies and counter-terror wings of security agencies.¹⁷

So far, however, no concrete step has been taken to that end. Apparently, the government struggles to find funds for the proposed force.

Analysis and discussion

Currently the federal government has directed provincial governments to implement the NAP agenda and the provincial police forces have taken some serious initiatives. The issue of better coordination is between federal and provincial governments, is another major issues as the provinces may be expecting grants and aid packages from Islamabad.

Combating terrorism is expensive, exhaustive and required national will but indeed there are plenty of success stories and Pakistani policy makers may learn by studying and evaluating different models and alter their needs accordingly. A concrete counter terrorism strategy paper is the need of the hour in order to provide a clear roadmap and policy

¹⁴ Syed Ali Shah, "PM, COAS attend passing-out parade of ATF in Quetta," *Dawn*, February 19, 2015.

¹⁵ Ismail Khan, "Pakistan to raise new anti-terrorism force," *Dawn*, August 21, 2003.

¹⁶ Mateen Haider, "Nawaz constitutes special committee to implement National Action Plan," *Dawn*, December 26, 2014.

¹⁷ "Pakistan to set up counter-terrorism force to check funding of militants," *The Indian Express*, December 26, 2014.

directive for provinces and law enforcement mechanisms.

There may be other ways to learn from other experienced nations having sufficient experience of raising Special Forces such as Algeria, UK, Israel, Turkey, Peru, Sri Lanka, Italy, France and Germany.

Pakistani security forces could benefit from Algerian security forces' experience in dealing with the Islamist terrorist organizations. The Algerians had been on offensive against the Islamist terrorists and have managed to defeat them. Their *modus operandi* could be studied and evaluated by Pakistani officers in strategizing a counter terrorism model applicable to our situation. Extreme repressive measures were taken by Algerian military and police to root out GIA, these measures included targeted killings of GIA sympathizers, donors, added with disappearances of hundreds of GIA militants. Black sites were established to detain and torture GIA suspects. Algerian government also successfully exposed the jihadi excesses and vices through mass media. In the final phase of war the Algerian government declared amnesty in case of unconditional surrender. The amnesty scheme was part of Charter of Peace and National Reconciliation. Many of the remnants of GIA immediately took advantage and surrendered before the authorities.

The Peruvian experience of tackling Shining Path could be taken as a poor man's effort to counter the menace of terrorism. Pakistan, equally poor in resources and dealing with a plethora of terrorist groups could take a leaf out of Peru's book to minimize the level of terrorist threats. Peru's counter terrorism experience is affordable and manageable. Pakistani policy makers may study and evaluate Peruvian measures and carefully apply some of those in Pakistan. In Peru, the government employed concrete counter terrorism policy measures in order to reverse the momentum of Shining Path, the main primary terrorist group in action. Emergency was declared by the parliament. National Intelligence Service was empowered and overhauled, whereas police was tasked to tackle terrorism in urban areas and military in rural areas. To protect villages from the onslaught of vengeful Shining Path militants Committees of Self Defense were established across Peru. Some harsh and controversial measures were indeed taken by the Peruvian military by destroying villages sympathetic to the cause of Shining Path.

Pakistan, despite its long-standing moral and diplomatic support to Palestinian cause, may attempt to learn some highly successful features of Israeli counter terrorism policies. Israel has managed to defeat a variety of organizations working against the interests of the state, within its borders. Pakistani policy makers, if

not replicate all of Israeli CT policies, may endeavor to adopt some in order to root out the menace of terrorism in which more than 55,000 Pakistanis have lost their lives.

Registration of madrassas and NAP

*Mujtaba Rathore**

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Since the National Action Plan (NAP) was put in place, the progress on one of its points, about registration and regulation of madrassas, seems to be far from satisfactory.

A deadlock has set in between the government and madrassa authorities; both have failed to sort out the procedure for stepping ahead. Although some action has been taken against the suspected seminaries in Sindh and Punjab provinces, the government is facing resistance from the country's biggest network of seminaries, Wafaqul Madaaris Al-Arabia.

Certainly, registering and regulating madrassas are key planks of countering militancy. Religious seminaries are accused of promoting sectarianism and extremism in society, and some are even involved in violence in the country. Registering them now will help distinct between those serving the cause of religion and those abetting and siding with terrorists.

The government and concerned authorities should handle the matter amicably and sensibly by keeping the religious scholars and madrassa authorities on board.

Ground reality

Madrassas play an important role in Pakistan, a Muslim-majority state, by providing religious education, producing religious scholars, and

guiding on religious matters. The major concern on them is about their alleged role in spreading extremism and sectarianism; some are accused of supporting and/or being involved in militancy in the country.

The National Action Plan formulated to combat militancy and extremism also proposed registering and regulating madrassas, so as to crack down on those madrassas which are suspected of supporting or promoting militancy. Moreover, sectarian culture in the madrassas will be eliminated by gradually bringing them into the mainstream education sector.

Madrassas in Pakistan generally affiliate with one of the five *wafaqs* – private religious educational boards governed by religious elite – reflecting their school of thought. In addition, they are supposed to register with the government. Yet, not all madrassas associate with the board (*wafaq*) are registered with the government and there are a number of others madrassas which are neither registered with these five board nor the government.

Ever since NAP has been launched, religious seminaries have come under greater surveillance. Intelligence and law enforcement agencies are investigating unregistered seminaries and their links with terrorist activities, across the country.

Sindh government has identified at least 48 madrassas in the province having links with banned organizations; half of these seminaries operate in Karachi. In a meeting of the apex committee, Inspector General Sindh Police informed that there are as many as 9,590 seminaries reported in the province, that 6,503 of them are registered and 3,087 un-registered, and that 167 have been sealed for violating law.¹

When it comes to Punjab, according to a list submitted by the Punjab government to the Supreme Court, there are 13,782 madrassas in Punjab; of these, 6,479 are unregistered while 7,303 are registered.² Other reports revealed the presence of 147 foreign-funded seminaries in Punjab.³

As of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, official sources in the ministries of interior and religious affairs revealed to the media that the most unregistered madrassas are in KP, at 4,135.⁴ Another report mentioned the

presence of about 145 “highly-sensitive” seminaries in KP.⁵

The total number of unregistered madrassas in Balochistan is 266.⁶

The revealed facts and figures clearly demonstrate the significance of registration of seminaries, but the government seems confused on what they want to achieve through the NAP’s relevant clause.

Few steps towards the initiative

The apex committees, or the bodies which monitor the implementation of NAP at provincial level, are silent about the progress on registration and regulation of madrassas.⁷ Only few steps have been taken so far, which include one-time preparation of registration form for madrassas, a few search operations in seminaries, and random identifications of unregistered madrassas.

¹ “CM House meeting: 50 madrassas in Sindh linked with banned outfits,” *Express Tribune*, August 6, 2015.

² “Number crunching: Nearly half of Punjab’s seminaries are unregistered,” *Express Tribune*, August 3, 2015.

³ Irfan Haider, “IGP report reveals 147 foreign-funded seminaries in Punjab,” *Dawn*, March 4, 2015.

⁴ Zahid Gishkori, “Uniform standards: Most unregistered Madaris in K-P, says officials,” *Express Tribune*, January 18, 2015.

⁵ Ali Akbar, “145 KP seminaries classified ‘highly sensitive’ in govt reports,” *Dawn*, March 2, 2015.

⁶ Zahid Gishkori, “Uniform standards: Most unregistered Madaris in K-P, says officials,”

⁷ The apex committees consisting of both military and political leadership have been formed in all provinces to coordinate the security matters and to implement the National Action Plan.

On madrasa registration, the meetings between government and madrasa authorities failed in the very beginning, when madrasa authorities rejected the new registration form. Still, the religious affairs department continues to be in contact with madrasa authorities to work out a middle path.

Minister for religious affairs said that his ministry was focused on reforming the religious sector, streamlining madrasa registration and facilitating the seminaries.⁸ In the first step, the federal ministry for religious affairs and the new management of the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board (PMEB), formed in 2001 by the Musharraf government to modernize traditional seminaries and root out extremism, are making efforts to affiliate madrasas with the board, after a gap of several years.

Across the country, there are about 8,000 to 10,000 independent seminaries not linked with any of board (*wifaq*). The PMEB plans to get these seminaries affiliated with the state-run board, thereby helping them to use the government syllabus as well as taking their examinations and seeking vocational training.⁹ Chairman PMEB said that

the authorities are only aiming to approach those madrasas which are not associated with any board. This way, they will register with the government automatically.

Meanwhile, the federal government is also planning to constitute an Islamic Education Commission (IEC) to regulate religious seminaries. According to the plan, the IEC will help government regulate the educational structure in all these seminaries.¹⁰

Furthermore, the provincial governments are taking steps for registering madrasas, but it is difficult until the proper mechanism is launched at central level.

For example, Sindh government decided to coordinate with the religious scholars of all schools of thought to get all madrasas registered under the amended laws in the province, according to which no new seminary will be established without obtaining a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the concerned deputy commissioner and home department as well as Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA). In a recent apex committee meeting, it was decided to ensure the gathering of comprehensive details

⁸ Ashraf Malkham, "Madrasa reform continues to be ignored," *The News*, May 5, 2015.

⁹ Zai Ur Rehman, "Fresh efforts being made to affiliate madrasas with PMEB," *The News*, June 26, 2015.

¹⁰ Noor Aftab, "Commission to regulate religious seminaries soon," *The News*, June 22, 2015.

about the madrassas in the province in accordance with the queries highlighted in recently prepared Performa by the Sindh government.

According to an official of Sindh government, provincial authorities have sought the guidelines from the federal government for registration of madrassas and even recommended some amendments to the process of registration of madrassas, but they are still waiting for the response.

The Punjab government claims it is successfully implementing the provisions of the action plan regarding the registration of madrassas and their foreign students in the province. The Punjab government shared the figure of registered and unregistered madrassas with the apex court and declared that the provincial authorities have completed geo-tagging of all registered and unregistered seminaries in the province.¹¹

According to Punjab government, there are 13,782 madrassas in the province and the provincial government now plans to start collecting the geographical data of seminaries. According to data collected by the government, there are around 480 foreign students

enrolled with the seminaries in the province whose visas have expired. The number of foreign students with valid visas and who are enrolled with seminaries in the province is said to be in excess of 400.¹²

Following NAP, the Sindh government has initiated the search operations in the seminaries that spread extremism. Police and Rangers raided several unregistered seminaries in Sukkur, seizing documents and phones and taking four clerics in custody for further questioning.¹³ According to media reports, the authorities have identified over 46 seminaries in Sindh with alleged links to terror groups. Of the 46 seminaries, 24 were located in Karachi, 12 in Hyderabad, four in Larkana and six in Sukkur.

Similarly, in Punjab province, police has recently arrested 14 suspects from madrassas in search operations in Lahore. The arrested people belonged to FATA, Quetta and southern Punjab who are living their without identification. Search operations were also conducted in several religious madrassas of different sects in Multan and Okara districts, and 16 suspects were arrested, besides recovering computers and other material.

¹¹ "Number crunching: Nearly half of Punjab's seminaries are unregistered," *Express Tribune*, August 3, 2015.

¹² Nasir Jamal, "Footprints: Madressahs: Still a class apart," *Dawn*, July 24, 2015.

¹³ "Seminaries raided, equipment, records seized," *Dawn*, June 15, 2015.

Success and failure

So little progress on the subject articulates the failure of government, which hasn't yet adopted any implementation mechanism to register and regulate the seminaries.

When it comes to madrassas, there are a number of issues, which can be neatly addressed by their registration and regulation.¹⁴

The government has rather made the entire issue controversial and complex. The matter should be kept simple by focusing only on the registration of madrassas, possible in consultation with madrasa authorities.

Alongside the registration process, other issues may resolve out gradually. The identification of suspected seminaries will also precede further actions.

The following reasons were behind the failure of government to achieve the NAP points on regulating and registering madrassas:

One, bureaucratic system continues to use delay techniques. Based on media reports, the madrasa registration issue is seen by a committee of bureaucrats coming from different departments like education, interior and religious

affairs departments. This divides the whole issue.

Two, the process of registering seminaries couldn't get complete, because of strong resistance from madrasa authorities.

Madrasa authorities cast doubts over government's unilateral process. The Ittehad Tanzeemat-e-Madaaris (ITM), the central body of religious educational institutions, strongly condemned the move as "against madrassas and religion". The government, on its part, failed to take madrasa authorities into confidence, who otherwise are willing to implement the registration process, provided they are informed about it.

Similarly, madrasa authorities are reluctant in allowing law-enforcement agencies to enter any seminary for search operation. Wafaqul Madaaris Al-Arabia announced protests countrywide against recent search operations, calling to stop them immediately.¹⁵

An official of the Wafaq from south Punjab complained that government's action against the seminaries reeks of discrimination against one particular sect, warning that such actions could pave way for fanaticism and sectarianism. He accused some administrators of

¹⁴ Mujtaba Rathore, "Madrasa reforms: the debate," *Conflict and Peace Studies* (PIPS)7(1): 25-42.

¹⁵ "Discontent as raids on seminaries continue," *Dawn*, August 8, 2015.

promoting sectarianism by including “peaceful and non-sectarian personalities” in the fourth schedule, which restricts their movement.

Three, in addition to fearing backlash from seminaries, the government also seems confused on how to deal with seminaries at all.

Besides the provincial governments, three federal departments are working on madrassa reforms. These are religious affairs ministry, provincial governments, and interior ministry. They lack coordination among each other, and seriousness too. They are functioning without any coordination on madrassa reforms program. Moreover, a committee tasked to curb religious persecution failed, too. Resultantly, the various departments are unable to reach any practical result on madrassas.

Four, lack of political will coupled with differences within the government over how to go about madrassas, have resulted into achieving the desired result merely a pipedream. The government’s efforts of reforming seminaries, this time, are no different from the past measures. Its dialogue with madrassa authorities is going nowhere. Madrassa authorities, on the other hand, think the government has no clear policy on madrassa reforms.

Conclusion

In the religious society of Pakistan where clergy are deeply-respected, it is difficult for any government to easily overcome their resistance. These days, they are opposed to the initiative of registering and regulating seminaries.

However, a sustained and results-oriented dialogue with them will ultimately find a way out towards that initiative, which will help mainstream the seminaries. All political and religious groups ought to make that way.

Instead of ignoring the seminary boards, which exercise power among its affiliates, the government may well implement the previous agreement signed between the religious affairs ministry and religious scholars.

Strong political will is also required to deal with the notorious elements in madrassas. Moreover, the sources of finances to madrassas should be identified, they should be regulated, and their curricula reorganized for promoting harmony.

In addition, actions against the madrassas involved in terrorism should be taken along a proper strategy prepared in consultation with religious authorities, thereby retaining their dignity.

As of the seminaries which are not linked with any terrorist or extremist

group, they could well be made part of counter-narrative against what terrorists and the extremists stand for.

Media as mirror

*Azaz Syed**

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Media have been a great tool of propaganda for the militants. Militants crave for it, to spread their ideologies, lure fresh recruits, attract more funds, and spread fear. Media connect militants with each other and with their audience – common people and policy elites.

At the time of Cold War, militants advanced their cause through print and radio. With time, other platforms were exploited, like television and internet. In the aftermath of the global war on terror, militants were forced to curtail their presence.

In Pakistan, many of those who went underground made their presence felt through printed or spoken words in the shape of magazines, journals, webpages, and audio cassettes or compact discs. Their public presence exposed state's resolve in fighting terror.

Thus, when National Action Plan was announced in December 2015, one of the points calls for "banning glorification of terrorism through print and electronic media". Ever since, the government claims to be implementing the point in "letter and spirit".

But six months later, it appears that the government's claim smack of a statement.

The old selective policy of ignoring, or supporting, some groups and haunting others still lurk in the background. Pro-Pakistan militant

outfits, which carry out activities in Afghanistan and Indian-held Kashmir, have well-grounded media houses which regularly produces documentaries and publishes content, glorifying violence in the name of religion.

The government's approach towards such outlets seems to be one of closed eyes. To be sure, anti-Pakistan group too release their work online. But they mostly release their work surreptitiously.

Legal homework

Although there are codes against hate speech, no specific legal work is done to curb glorification of militants on media.

By mid-2015, three of the four provinces have yet to introduce specific laws countering the spread of militant ideology. Ironically, these three provinces are the hardest hit by militancy: Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Sindh.

Punjab is the only province to have shown some headway – in terms of statute. On January 21st, Punjab legislature promulgated the amended Punjab Maintenance of Public Order, 2015, which bans glorification of terrorists and their outfits at any forum and in the media. Violators will be imprisoned for six months and slapped a fine ranging from 25000 to 100,000 rupees.

This act clearly reads that a “person shall not, by words spoken or written, use any formal forum to support terrorism or terrorists, or attempt to create sympathy for any terrorist or terrorist organization, or to oppose action of” different law-enforcement agencies.

After the ordinance was promulgated, Punjab government launched a crackdown against the hate material. According to an interior ministry document, the government, as of July 13th, 2015, has registered 1776 cases against hate speakers, arrested 1799 individuals, and convicted 236. Meanwhile, only 71 shops have been sealed and 1512 hate material confiscated. It is unclear as to what constitute one hate material – a book or a pack of books?

Still publishing ...

Several outfits continue to release their work, despite NAP and the law in Punjab.

Take the case of Jamaat ud Dawa (JUD), a charity front of an anti-India outfit. The group continues to spew hatred against non-Muslims and glorify militancy in the name of jihad. JUD's seven Urdu and English periodicals include *Jarrar*, *Tayyibaat*, and *Zarb-e-Taiba*. It is striking to note that the government could not take notice of such content produced

by an outfit that is under watch list of the interior ministry.

Or, the case of the defunct Jaish-e-Mohammed, which now works under the name of Al-Rehmat Trust. The Trust regularly publishes an eight-page weekly *Al-Qalam* from Bahawalpur and Rawalpindi. A recent edition of *Al-Qalam*, available online at a separate portal, projects the role of militants and their activities inside India.¹

Or even, Khudaam ul Furqan, another defunct organization, which operating under the new name of Tehreek-e-Ghalba-e-Islam publishes weekly *Ghalba*. Another defunct organization Khudaam ul Furqan working under the new name of Tehreek-e-Ghalba-e-Islam is also publishing weekly *Ghalba* on regular basis.

Incoherent regulation

When it comes to mainstream media, like TV network or newspaper, the NAP's media-specific point is partially implemented. Partially, because some see “there is an overall positive change” in the attitude of media to the discredit of militants.²

As to why the ban couldn't be implemented completely, it is

¹ Online version of the magazine can be accessed at: <http://www.alqalamonline.com>.

² Author's interview with Matiullah Jan, senior journalist and anchorperson based in Islamabad.

important to unpack the dynamics of media.

A media outlet stands on two key pillars: news, which involve day-to-day reporting; and views, which offer opinion on those reports, in editorials or talk shows.

When it comes to the news side, print and electronic media overwhelmingly played a responsible role in not covering the narrative of the militants. The only coverage news bulleting and news pages gave to militants was their claim of attacks. This was done, only to inform audience about the militants. Beyond that, mainstream media avoided airing and publishing the militants' 'side' of the story.

In comparison, the pillar of views tilted towards the militant story too. The editorials in the print as well as the primetime talk shows kept offering a narrative supportive of militants. These platforms, for instance, openly provided space to those individuals who publicly supported the militants' version. Guest list of several prominent talk shows include individuals known for sharing a narrow worldview, which aligns with that of the militants. The same people also write, either openly or as ghost writers, in leading newspapers, mostly of Urdu language. Furthermore, the very same people write as pseudonyms to

jihadi publications like *Zaraar* and *Al Qalam*, discussed above. Such is the nexus between the two strands of publications.

To several TV anchors, inviting such guests is often a tact ensuring security. "The apologists of extremists are invited by anchors only to ensure that they are on the safer side and would not be harmed by the militants", a senior journalist and television anchor, Matiullah Jan said.

It is not that media has not been asked to stop propagating militant message. According to Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority, the country's electronic media regulatory body,³ it has provided a "list of the defunct organizations to the media outlets." PEMRA argues that it has issued almost ten "advisories" to private networks, asking them to restrain from projecting sympathizers of militants.⁴ "They should avoid publicizing their [militants] stories," said Azam Khan, federal information secretary and PEMRA member.

As violations continue, even of PEMRA's own advisories, the media regulatory body watches by. To date, no fine has been imposed on any channel for inviting militant-sympathetic people.

³Author's interview with a representative of PEMRA.

⁴ Ibid.

A former chairman of PEMRA, Parvaiz Rathore, says that “PEMRA acts according to the law” but “practically paralyzed”. “The media houses are very powerful. They have links in every section of society including judiciary. They often take our decisions to the court, which grant them stay orders. Thus, we are practically paralyzed.”⁵

Ironically, PEMRA itself hasn’t moved against violators. “We will take notice and issue show cause to them, when we observe any violation of our directions,” says PEMRA spokesman.⁶

As a way forward, Ministry of Information or PEMRA should immediately start a survey for the identification of such media personnel, who side with militants and project their ideologies, and should arrange workshops and seminars for them in sensitizing them about the pitfalls of promoting militant ideologies. Likewise, PEMRA must start fining the media houses involved in violation of the directions on this account.

Of course, this is linked with other gaps – presence of law and thinking beyond the selective approach.

⁵Author’s interview with Parvaiz Rathore in Islamabad.

⁶Interview by the author.

FATA's ill-fate

*Muhammad Ismail Khan**

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One of the points of NAP called for expediting administrative and development reforms in FATA. It was hoped that after the 16th December tragedy, those at the helm of power would come up with tangible reforms for FATA to crush militancy.

In more than ten year of war against terrorism, FATA has been a constant reference. Militants of several shades established network there, continuing attacks countrywide. Since 2007, the anti-Pakistan Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) operated from there. Like several other high profile attacks, the APS attack was carried out by militants who had made their way from the adjoining tribal areas.¹ Similarly, Afghanistan too has been complaining about the presence of anti-Afghan militants like Haqqani network leaders and their abode in FATA. In 2014, former Director General of Inter-Services Press Release (ISPR) admitted that all sorts of militants had gathered in North Waziristan.²

That is why, security observers have long been pointing towards dealing

with FATA to settle militancy in the country.

To this end, Pakistan's traditional response has been an all-out operation in the tribal agencies considered as troublemaker. On June 15, 2014, Pakistan military launched a military operation in North Waziristan, known as Zarb-e-Azb. Earlier, Pakistan had launched more than ten major military operations in FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, starting from 2002.

These operations did not prove a long-lasting solution to the problem of militancy stemming from FATA. Once the operation concluded, the militants staged their come-back after some time, expanding their network with time. The long-term sustainability of the current operation, too, needs to be seen.

What in fact will contribute to long-term security and peace in FATA, particularly after the security operations conclude and military presence is reduced, are the political and administrative reforms. A similar point was raised in the NAP, which calls for expediting

¹ Several other attacks owned or carried out from FATA include assassination of Benazir Bhutto and Bashir Bilour, attack on GHQ and PAF airbases.

² Asif Faruki, "Kayani hesitated, delayed operation resulting into big loss,"

(Author's translation), BBC Urdu, June 30, 2014, http://www.bbc.com/urdu/pakistan/2014/06/140630_waziristan_delay_kayani_blame_zz.shtml.

administrative and development reforms in FATA.

Keen observers agree that the administrative reforms in FATA would be instrumental in rooting out the deadly militant networks from there.

To date, FATA's administrative structure has been kept distant from the rest of country. FATA is still ruled by Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) which denies the people several fundamental rights. Even now, under this code, any person can be arrested for the crime committed by someone of his tribe.

For all the powers the code delegated to the local administration, it failed in checking the rise of militants, who went on to advance their influence in FATA.

Similarly, in 2011, the government extended Action in Aid of Civil Power, which a politician once likened to martial law over FATA.³ Yet, militancy didn't end, evident from the rationale given behind the on-going military operation in North Waziristan.

All these institutions of modern state are necessary to keep some check on the rise of the militants. From policing end, settling for FATA status is important. Militants from FATA have attacked in settled areas, and escaped back, precisely because they are out of bounds for the law-enforcement agencies of the settled areas. That is why KP police, around the time of APS attack, also wrote to the higher authorities to decide about the status of FATA.⁴

Almost every political party desires FATA reforms. The apex courts too have asked for extending jurisdiction of higher courts into FATA.

Reforming FATA will directly impact country's fight against terrorism. The breeding houses of militants would somewhat come under scrutiny. Besides this, the tribal belt will attract investment in different social sectors, which too may mitigate conflict in the long term there.

The previous government did some efforts at reforming administrative structure of FATA, such as by allowing political parties to contest from there and amending the FCR off its most-draconian clauses. However, progress on the latter front is yet to be

³ "The Hands of Cruelty: Abuses By Armed Forces and Taliban In Pakistan's Tribal Areas", Amnesty International, page 39, http://www.amnesty.nl/sites/default/files/public/p4026_end_impunity_in_tribal_areas.pdf

⁴ Javed Aziz Khan, "IGP suggests Fata integration into KP," *The News*, December 15, 2014, <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-7-290163-IGP-suggests-Fata-integration-into-KP>.

seen; as the clauses of collective responsibility are invoked even now.

In one of the recent developments, in May 2014, a committee known as the FATA Reforms Committee was constituted, to "to frame strategic objectives for the volatile tribal areas for the next 25 years."⁵ After extensive deliberations, the Committee released its report.⁶

The report, however, didn't come up with any policy suggestions on the administrative status of FATA. Unsurprisingly, several FATA lawyers rejected the Committee's report. The Commission's chairman rather said that deciding about constitutional reform was not in the domain of the commission.⁷

To many, it reflects the old strategy: dealing with militants heavily-handedly, and leaving the status of FATA aside. The fear is that once the operation concludes, the vacuum will once again provide militants an opportunity to re-group there.

Meanwhile, in May 2015, the government constituted FATA Tribunal, to take up cases dispensed by administrators.⁸ This tribunal,

however, has limited powers. FATA lawyers point out that it lacks *writ jurisdiction* of fundamental human rights and cannot issue contempt of court notices, and invoke *suo mottos*. They are wondering as to what will be status of the tribunal if the political agent doesn't agree with its decision.

In September 2015, reports circulated that the two northern agencies, Bajaur and Mohmand, might be converted into Provincially-Administered Tribal Areas (PATA), an administrative structure that comes under the control of KP.⁹ On ground, however, not much appears to changing. As a starting point, local government elections could be held in FATA or at least those agencies which are considered as terror free now.

Progress on FATA marks Pakistan's overall commitment on other fronts. As long as FATA remains distinct, doubts will linger over Pakistan's commitment to fight terrorism in and outside

⁵ Zulfiqar Ali, "Another commission formed on Fata reforms," *Dawn*, May 20, 2014.

⁶ "FATA Reforms Commission Notification (May 2014)," <http://fatareforms.org/2014/05/16/fata-reforms-commission-notification-may-2014>.

⁷ "Commission and political forces disagree on FATA constitutional reform," *FATA Reforms*, May15, 2015.

⁸ "'Much awaited' Fata Tribunal formed," *Dawn*, May 28, 2015.

⁹ Iftikhar Firdous, "Bajaur, Mohmand agencies' merger into PATA proposed," *Express Tribune*, September 3, 2015.

Watching online space

*Nighat Dad**

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Needless to say, militants exploit online space for their narrow agenda. Internet proliferate their messages, spreading it to distant areas and unknown people. Jihadist groups, for instance, run websites which freely offers videos and magazines espousing their thinking; anyone can read that material and watch video. This way, online medium serves as yet another recruitment and propaganda platform to the militants.

With this mind, probably, the government inserted a point, in NAP, of regulating social media and internet.

Surely, checking internet is one important step in eliminating terrorist. But several factors raise doubts if the effort will ever be effective in catching terrorists.

First of all, how much of online space has in reality been exploited for recruitment in Pakistan is unknown. Yes, the failed Times Square bomber drew inspiration from YouTube videos of an Al-Qaeda ideologue in Yemen, but that was in the United States, not Pakistan. Pakistani militancy has largely made inroads in those areas where the accessibility of internet is low, like FATA or south Punjab.

This is not to say that urban terrorists don't rely on internet. They do. But they are steps ahead of the

monitoring measures our officials have been thinking of. Militants reportedly send each other messages in encrypted language or by leaving messages at public forums.

Squeezing open space

Post-NAP, the suggested remedy by the government is not in synch with the digital bits on ground. Reportedly, the government has been planning to roll out cybercrime bill, in response to the militant threat. That bill will encompass activities beyond the domain of terrorism.

Modern-day terrorism that confronts Pakistan is a temporary phenomenon. It has come to haunt us after the 9/11 attacks mostly. Since then, there has been urges to fight militants at home. Much of the failure in driving militancy out has to do with our inaction and confusion. Once the state decides to face militants head-on, as it claims so, terrorist won't stay for long.

What is need is a time-bound response, not something that is ever lasting. Military courts are a case in point, to which political parties agreed only when the government ensured that the courts will stay for two years only.

The cybercrime bill will stay forever. Once enacted, it will stay as law.

The said bill is draconian, simply. With no protections, the bill slaps strict punishments: several years of punishment, and hefty fine. People can be grilled for mere suspicion; their devices could be confiscated. Likewise, the definition of “anti-Pakistan” is too vague. The law can also punish someone accused of supporting crime.¹

Surely, no country should compromise on its national security, but having a law that strips off rights for ever, in the name of security, is not a reasonable way out. The law declares terrorist anyone who commits crime online. The two need not be connected.

Currently, the bill is sitting with the standing committee of the National Assembly. A working group has also been constituted to ‘fine tune’ the bill. But the whole process is kept secret. Little is known about the group’s members, meeting minutes, and other details.

To be sure, the exercise on drafting a cybercrime bill started much earlier. And it includes a broad range of issues including electronic theft. But, it was after NAP that more urgency was expressed to re-draft the bill that caters to the militant problem and pass it immediately. To some, the substance of the cybercrime bill is

based on countering the militant threat.

Anusha Rehman, minister for I.T., readily admits that the need for new bill is contingent upon the militant threat. On one occasion, she counted security agencies and IT stakeholders (ministry of IT, IT professionals) as the only two stakeholders to the bill. When asked if civil society can be counted, she dismissed the calls.

Clearly, what she and her party ignores is that should political landscape change a bit, they might find their own colleagues dragged under the cybercrime bill.

Surely, abuse or hate speech populates online space. Lately, there has been a tendency among some section to outrightly degrade, curse, and harass others. They should be checked, as demanded passionately by human rights activists. But such hate speak is often traced to the corridors of the rightwing speakers, who quickly jump at questioning the faith or loyalty of their rivals. Such people squeeze whatever little space there is for those desiring a pluralistic voice. And they go unchecked.

As of now, the suggested remedy by Pakistani government aims at further squeezing those voices, to the advantage of those who flout an

¹ For details of the amended bill, see:

Waseem Abbasi, "Law to punish cyber-crimes on the cards," *The News*, September 7, 2015.

exclusive agenda aimed at stifling voices of other people.

This despite that there are already laws through which the government can keep an eye on terrorism activities online; being one of them; Anti-Terrorism Act 1997 deals with terrorism, Section 509 of the PPC deals with crimes against women and the 1887 Telegraph Act. Then, there is Pakistan Protection Act, with a breakout time of two years. And so forth.

Ironically, the goal-oriented terrorists find their way out. They are tech-savvy, too. It would not be an exaggeration to say that they operate beyond the capacity of the government.

What is, therefore, worrisome is that while the terrorists might get away with their acts, the common citizens will come in the crosshairs.

A committee was also formed to monitor the progress on this point of NAP. Nine months later, there is no information available about the committee meetings and decisions made.

Black and white approach

The government has limited technical capacity of handling cyber-related issues, as if there is little understanding of the issue.

Generally, when it comes to data collection, the agencies have to get a warrant for that, under Fair Trial Act. However, on what the government has been doing, the approach is in black and white, comprising of two key elements: monitoring and censorship.

The government has already been monitoring web and suspending websites it accused of being anti-Pakistan. As of now, internet in Pakistan is regulated by Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, a regulatory body. According to a report by Privacy International, as of June 2013, Pakistani intelligence agency "sought to develop a mass surveillance system" to monitor Pakistani internet users on a massive scale following American National Security Agency model.²

The government's approach is buying software worth millions of dollars. Fin Fisher costing 57 million Pakistani rupees is an example; rather ironically, this surveillance software, costing millions of dollars, monitored on a handful of people.³

² "Tipping the scales: Security & surveillance in Pakistan," Privacy Intelligence, <https://www.privacyinternational.org/>

[sites/default/files/PAKISTAN%20REPORT%20HIGH%20RES%2020150721.pdf](https://www.privacyinternational.org/sites/default/files/PAKISTAN%20REPORT%20HIGH%20RES%2020150721.pdf)
³"Pakistan is a Fin Fisher customer, leak confirms," DRF, August 22, 2014,

Then, there were reports that Pakistani IT companies, on behalf of security agencies, have approached notorious international firms, like Hacking Team, to buy surveillance technologies worth of million dollars. A recent Privacy International is an eye-opener in this regards.

For late, the government has been planning to lay a mass surveillance system; even a tender has been floated.

Rather strikingly, the government has blocked websites that have nothing to do with terrorism. On the other hand, the websites of terrorism are freely accessible. Part of suspicion owes to government's selective regulation of internet: while the government has eagerly clamped down on Baloch websites, websites luring youth on religious grounds stay open.

There are also several codes invoked to clamp down on internet users: Anti-Terrorism Act, Pakistan Protection Ordinance, blasphemy law, exceptions of article 19 of the constitution. These legislations empower different security bodies to do the job. ATA gives power to police, proposed cyber bill to the agencies, and PPA to the military. There are stark disagreements among

them, yet the same power is diffused to different authorities.

With new law, government's surveillance will be further unregulated and massive, although it is mentioned that the Fair Trial Act 2013 will be followed to acquire the warrants from High Court to conduct surveillance however there is still an accountability question about the implementation of such FTA provisions aim to regulate surveillance powers by agencies. From the outset it is still too arbitrary and collected data end up to exploit political gains.

One of the provisions of the proposed bill deals with seized data. Under the law, the government will retain the data for one year, whereas the ISPs are asked to keep it for long. There is fear that the government cannot protect the data it intends to retain, and that the data might get 'leaked' to exploit political goals.

We, demanding a change in this provision, are asking to remove the requirement for blanket retention of metadata by service providers. Mandatory blanket retention of metadata is inherently disproportionate and therefore a violation of the right to privacy. Instead, service providers may be required, upon a judicially-authorized warrant, to provide the

<http://digitalrightsfoundation.pk/pakistan-is-a-finfisher-customer-leak-confirms>.

relevant authorities with metadata that the service providers collect for the purposes of delivering their services on specified individuals

There should be a comprehensive legislation on personal data protection. Pakistan has none. There

is no way that victims of privacy violations can get legal remedy. Also a privacy commission should be established which should work as a watch dog and not only entertain peoples complaints but keep an eye on upcoming legislations against violation of privacy rights.

Zero tolerance for militancy in Punjab

*Aoun Sahi**

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On December 25th, 2014, nine days after Pakistani Taliban attacked Army Public School in Peshawar, killing 150, mostly children, the country's political leadership approved a comprehensive 20-point National Action Plan against terrorism. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, in a televised address to the nation, described the incident as having "transformed the country."

Rare admission

Beyond the usual vows of countering the "terrorist mind-set", Prime Minister Sharif made a rare admission of the presence of militant groups in the country's largest province Punjab, when he vowed to go after them, come what may.¹ A political leader who attended the meeting approving NAP recalled that one of the topics that dominated the discussion was militancy in Punjab. "It was discussed at length that to make NAP successful, there would be zero tolerance to militancy in Punjab", he said requesting anonymity.² Clearly enough, NAP too calls invokes the same point.

In the past, especially after 9/11, the state hardly took serious actions against Punjab-based militant organizations. The focus was largely on Pakistani Taliban and other

FATA-based groups fighting security forces in tribal areas and adjoining Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Over years, Punjab became main centre of militant and religious organizations. On January 14th, 2015, interior minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan briefed Prime Minister that the number of proscribed organisations actively engaged in terrorism and extremism in Punjab province alone, had reached 95.³

Punjab-based groups carry signatures on the most deadly and audacious plots. Not only did they carry out attacks in key Punjab cities like Lahore and Rawalpindi, Punjab-based groups had key role in terrorism outside Punjab: They fought security forces in tribal areas and KP, especially in Swat; orchestrated sectarian attacks against Shia Hazaras in Quetta; attacked military installations in Karachi; and rammed Marriot Hotel in Islamabad. That is why a leading security expert wrote that the "real battle against violent extremism" would have to be fought in Punjab.⁴

Punjabi militants didn't emerge now. Many first fought during the Afghan war in 1980s and later shifted their focus to Kashmir in 1990s. According to some reports, in 1990s, at least 72

¹ Khawar Ghumman, "NAP report indicates little progress on key fronts," *Dawn*, April 3, 2015.

² Author's interview with a politician, who requested anonymity.

³ Khawar Ghumman, "95 banned groups active in Punjab," *Dawn*, January 15, 2015.

⁴ Zahid Hussain, "Tackling militancy in Punjab," *Dawn*, December 31, 2014.

jihadi organizations were active in Punjab; many merged into bigger groups, and several splintered. Throughout, many of these groups retaining their old links with Afghan Taliban, Al-Qaeda, and other outfits in Pakistani tribal areas.

Often, militancy in Punjab is dumped to it southern Punjab. In May 2012, chief minister Punjab Shahbaz Sharif admitted that the southern part of Punjab was a “breeding ground” for militants. (Yet, Punjab governments hardly took action against the militant network and outfits there.)

But Punjab militant networks go beyond the province’s southern belt. Many militant organizations have successfully established their networks in urban centres of northern and central Punjab, too. In mid-2014, the special branches of Rawalpindi and Islamabad police reported that Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan was receiving full support from religious seminaries in Rawalpindi, where 20 Deobandi seminaries served as bases for terrorists to launch attacks in the twin cities.

Vast network

Post-9/11, when the United States attacked Afghanistan, scores of Al-Qaeda leaders ran to Pakistan, where they were arrested from different cities of Punjab. The vast madrassa

network in the province, spreading the militant ideology, hosted the Arab ‘guests.’

Hardly actions have been taken against the 20 or so seminaries in Rawalpindi, special branches have identified, or many others across Punjab, despite the announcement of NAP.

Dawn attributed the inaction to protests by religious parties:

“The religious parties, after protesting vigorously that their seminaries should not be caught up in the dragnet, had gone quiet and those with a presence in politics had returned to business as usual, a clear enough sign that their apprehensions have been assuaged.

How has this silence come about? Have they been given an assurance that their networks will not be touched in the course of fighting terror? And if so, will this assurance weaken the fight or strengthen it?”⁵

Punjab government informed the Supreme Court on July 23, 2015 that 16,000 madrassas are working in the province. Nearly 6000 of these are unregistered, according to the then Punjab home minister Colonel (Retd.) Shuja Khanzada. He also admitted that “some seminaries” in

⁵*Dawn* editorial titled “Government’s confusion,” published on March 10, 2015.

Punjab were funded by “brotherly Muslim countries.” (Khanzada was killed in a suicide attack in August 2015.⁶)

Home department officials argue that majority of madrassas are unwilling to register under the new form the interior ministry issued, probably because the form also asks for reveal funding source.

Superficial enthusiasm

After NAP was announced, Punjab government showed some seriousness initially to curb the militancy. This seems to be the claim made in an official report the province submitted to the Prime Minister’s Office in March 2015. According to this report, between late December 2014 and March 2015, the security agencies conducted 14,791 operations in Punjab and arrested 2,798 people. Moreover, Punjab police also arrested 3,214 people for violating the usage of loud speaker and registered 707 cases of hate speech. More people from banned organizations were put under the Fourth Schedule of the Anti-Terrorism Act, so as to monitor their activities; the figure now is 1700.

Officials also feel less pressurized to implement the NAP. “In the earlier days, there was a lot of pressure to arrest more and more people under

NAP,” an official said, despite that arresting people would not solve militancy issue. This, he said, has decreased over time.⁷

Even when interior ministry prepared a progress report on National Action Plan by the end of March, it didn’t delve much into progress on Punjab. All it wrote about progress on countering militancy in Punjab was a one line: “Punjab government is actively pursuing government policy in this regard”. There was no explanation of what this “government policy” was and what Punjab government is “actively pursuing.”

In any case, scepticism followed if those arrested mattered. A police official based in Lahore noted that most of those arrested in the province were low-ranked members or workers of banned organizations, who had nothing to do with policy making of those organizations. “Majority of them were detained for one month or so and were released by courts on the first hearing”, he said.

Ahl-e-Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ) is one such sectarian group which reportedly came under the radar of the government. The group previously operated as Sipah-e-Sahaba (SSP), which itself was the reincarnation of Pakistan’s most

⁶ “Punjab home minister Shuja Khanzada killed in terror attack,” *Dawn*, August 17, 2015.

⁷ Author’s interview with a government official, who requested anonymity.

dreadful sectarian-militant group of Pakistan Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ). ASWJ was reportedly banned in March 2012, though it continues to work openly in the country.⁸

In the recent crackdown, 600 of its activists were arrested from Punjab, according to its member. This made a group's senior member claim that the major targets of the recent crackdown were activists of his organisation.

A couple of months later, most of them were released. "The law enforcement authorities failed to produce proofs against them in court of law", he said. A police officer complained, "It is the conviction rate; that is the problem."

The situation is compared to nationwide crackdown: on May 28th, NACTA's national coordinator revealed in parliament that of the 49,000 suspects arrested from all over the country, after December 2014, only 129 belonged to the TTP.⁹

An AWSJ member said that the security forces were "trying to create an environment of fear by registering cases and arresting people." This, he warned, will backfire, as "most of those arrested have come out of jails

with tougher stance against government and security forces."

Deeper shift?

On July 29, 2015, Pakistani woke to the news that Malik Ishaq, founding member of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, a Sunni extremist group, was killed in a mysterious shootout in Muzaffargarh, Punjab, along with his two sons and eleven associates.

Malik Ishaq inspired many Deobandi-aligned militant outfits in Punjab, with footprints on many attacks against Shias across the country. In 2014, the State Department put him on the list of wanted terrorists.

As to how his death will impact militant landscape of Punjab is to be seen. Although he parted ways with ASWJ, which he thought was too 'peaceful', he drew support from a significant section of ASWJ's youth members. There is a strong possibility that like-minded charged youth from different Deobandi militant outfits could join hands to take revenge of his death. This could set in revival of LeJ in Punjab.

Punjab Home Minister attributed Ishaq's death to National Action

⁸BBC Urdu, March 9, 2012, http://www.bbc.com/urdu/pakistan/2012/03/120309_ahl_sunnat_jamat_ban_zs.shtml.

⁹ Zahid Gishkori, "Unsatisfactory progress: Newly crafted anti-terror strategy going nowhere," *Express Tribune*, May 29, 2015.

Plan.¹⁰ Many are wondering if Pakistan has finally woken to the threat of militants like Ishaq, who until his death, was considered off-limits.

Is that really so?

A July 2015 report by International Crisis Group claimed that despite “claims to the contrary, the military, which has almost complete control over national security and counter-terrorism policy, also still distinguishes between ‘bad’ jihadi groups, those targeting the security forces, and ‘good’ jihadi groups, those perceived to promote its strategic objectives in India and Afghanistan.”¹¹ Some of the latter groups are in Punjab.

A Lahore-based academic, contests the claim of Punjab government taking any action. The ruling party Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, being a right wing party, would “hardly take actions against militancy.”¹² Some in PML-N are even accused of having links with Punjab-based militant groups. According to Hassan Askari Rizvi, “They still stuck in the conceptualization of militancy and terrorism.”¹³

One ASWJ member objected to selective approach of security forces in Punjab, saying “hardly any action taken against Jamaatud Dawa” in Punjab. “Such tactics breeds more hatred”, he said, adding “the current approach risks aggravating the situation rather than limiting the problem of militancy.”¹⁴

¹⁰ “Killing of LeJ chief Malik Ishaq was part of NAP, says Punjab home minister,” *Pakistan Today*, July 31, 2015.

¹¹ International Crisis Group, “Revisiting Counter-terrorism Strategies in Pakistan: Opportunities and Pitfalls,” Asia Report No. 271, July 22, 2015.

¹² Author’s interview with Hassan Askari Rizvi.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Author’s interview with a member of ASWJ.

Karachi Operation

*Zia Ur Rehman**

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At the time of the school attack in Peshawar in December 2014, a targeted operation was already in its second year in Karachi. Launched in September 2013 and led by law-enforcement agencies, with paramilitary Rangers playing a key role, the Karachi operation has been targeting terrorists, militant wings of various political parties as well as criminal syndicates.

As the government adopted National Action Plan (NAP) in the wake of the Peshawar school attack, it decided to continue with the operation in Karachi. "Ongoing operation in Karachi will be taken to its logical end," read NAP.

Hub of crime economy

Karachi, with its affluent residents and big businesses, has proved fertile ground of financing of every sort of criminal activity whether Taliban militants, ethno-political parties or criminal syndicates, carry these out.

In 2013, Geo News quantified the size of 'crime economy' of the city, revealing that its residents are deprived of Rs 830 million daily through extortion chits, kidnappings for ransom, encroachments, loot and

plunder, street crimes, police excesses and other crimes.¹

On June 4, 2015, Rangers Sindh Director General, Major General Bilal Akbar, in his briefing in the apex committee reportedly claimed that more than 230 billion rupees are generated annually from citizens of Karachi through extortion, smuggling of Iranian diesel, water supply and land-grabbing, hides of sacrificial animals, and charity funds like *fitra*, *zakat*.² (The briefing's details were shared with media in the form of press release a week later on June 11.)

The Rangers' account of huge 'crime economy' of Karachi has astounded many but not traders community, which, in fact, has been bearing the brunt of 'extortion' at every level. Traders said that they used to pay the extortion money not only to the criminals belonging to independent syndicates and political parties but also to government officials.

Lyari gangs

Besides targeting the Taliban groups operating in Karachi including the TTP, the operation has, since the onset in 2013, focused on shattering the criminal networks in Lyari town.

¹"Karachi's black economy generates Rs830 million daily," Geo News, September 3, 2013, <http://www.geo.tv/article-116604-Karachis-black-economy-generates-Rs830-million-daily>.

² Imran Ayub, "Billions of black money being used to fund terrorism in Karachi: Rangers chief", Dawn, June 12, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1187627>

Many people have earlier died in this old town of Karachi, in the vortex of gang wars and crime.

In the on-going operation, law-enforcement agencies have shattered the crime network, by killing a number of gang leaders.³

Taliban in Karachi

Four factions of the TTP operate in the city, reflective of the broader divides in the TTP.

One of these is a faction of TTP Swat, loyal to Mullah Fazlullah, current TTP head, believed to have fled to Afghanistan. In Karachi, the TTP Swat' has a secretive setup. It is this group which has mostly killed policemen and leaders of Awami National Party in the western areas of the town.

Another is a faction of TTP Mohmand, which, after separating from the TTP, renamed itself as TTP-Jamaat Ahrar. Loyal to Mohmand-based Omar Khalid Khurasani, this group got major dents in Karachi at the hands of security personnel.⁴

As of the remaining two factions, they are derived from TTP South

Waziristan, or TTP Mehsud, comprising mainly Mehsud militants. One of these subscribes to Shehryar Mehsud, another to Khan Said alias Sajna, both based in tribal areas. In Karachi, Shehryar's group is led by an ex-policeman Daud Mehsud.

Attacking these groups has been one of the goals of the operation from the start.

A Karachi-based Mehsud tribal elder, requesting anonymity, claimed that after NAP, many Taliban militants have been killed by law-enforcement agencies, especially Rangers. "We haven't seen the Taliban killing anyone or extorting traders in the last two months. The TTP militants have disappeared and the residents of Pashtun neighbourhoods are now feeling secure," he said.⁵

Political parties

A few months ago, after an important meeting attended by army chief, corps commander Karachi, director general of Inter-Services Intelligence and director general of Rangers, law-enforcement agencies started naming politicians – for the first time. So much so that according to Rangers,

³ Author's interview with a Lyari-based social activist, Jan Baloch, July 19, 2015.

⁴ Zia Ur Rehman, "Broken in city, Taliban factions forge alliance for survival," *The News*, March 28, 2015.

⁵ Zia Ur Rehman, "Mehsuds in Karachi no longer in control of Mehsuds in Miramshah", *The News*, July 14, 2015, <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-4-328817-Mehsuds-in-Karachi-no-longer-in-control-of-Mehsuds-in-Miramshah>

much of the money generated in Karachi is mainly patronized by “a major political party”.⁶

Officials in law enforcement agencies said, after shattering the network of the TTP and Lyari’s criminal gangs, now they are focused on ethno-political and sectarian parties involved in targeted killings and extortions.

The first party to feel pressure was the Muttahida Qaumi Movement, a party popular among Urdu-speaking community in Karachi. The party has already been under pressure in Karachi and London. They see ongoing operation against them.

Also, besides detaining a number of the MQM activists in recent months, Rangers arrested a number of its activists for allegedly forcibly collecting donations in the city’s Rizvia Society neighborhood on July 2. In response, MQM lashed out at the law-enforcement agency. “Arresting workers for collecting Zakat and Fitra is an attempt to create hurdles in the way of welfare work and an atrocity on the masses,” the party’s statement said.⁷

The Rangers’ action against members and leaders of political parties for

their purported involvement in crimes and financial support to militants also upset the ranks of the PPP-led Sindh government. In mid-June, PPP’s leader and former president Asif Ali Zardari openly came down harsh on the military establishment for stepping beyond its domain.⁸

With a few days, Rangers arrested the Fishermen Cooperative Society (FCS)’s acting chairman and two directors for alleged corruption and crime financing in Lyari. All the three arrested officials were appointed by the ruling PPP. FCS’s chairman Dr. Nisar Morai, also an aide of the PPP’s top leader, was not in country; he had left abroad four months earlier, probably fearing arrest. Rangers briefed the anti-terrorist court that the FCS’s arrested directors would forward seventy percent of the ‘black money’ they collected to Bilawal House, which serves as the PPP head office in Karachi.⁹ Meanwhile, National Accountability Bureau (NAB) also arrested five officials allegedly linked with land grabbing and terror financing. Above all, Rangers entered the premises of the Sindh Building Control Authority,

⁶ Rangers’ press release, July 11, 2015.

⁷ “Rangers arrest MQM workers for ‘forcibly’ collecting Fitra in Karachi,” *The News*, July 2, 2015.

⁸ “Zardari cautions military establishment for ‘stepping out of

domain”, *Dawn*, June 17, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1188576>

⁹ Zia Ur Rehman, “As law catches up with FCS officials’ fishy business, workers suffer,” *The News*, July 4, 2015.

collecting key documents about buildings.¹⁰

Besides two key parties in Sindh (MQM and PPP), the Sunni Tehreek, the Awami National Party and Sindh nationalist parties have also been in the radar of Rangers for several months and dozens of their members allegedly involved in criminal activities have been arrested. In June, Rangers raided the ST's headquarter twice, detaining for several hours its central leadership at Rangers Headquarter.¹¹ "The ST is the only party which did not protest over the arrest of its members. We support the Rangers' operation against targeted killers, extortionists and criminals in every party, including the ST," said a ST leader.¹²

Political experts link the recent raids to attempts at ending terror and crime financing. "For such groups, funds are very important for running their activities and they could generate funds either from abroad or the Karachi," said a journalist.¹³

Law enforcement officials also corroborate it. "For bringing sustainable peace in the city, it is

imperative to take action against 'terror financing' networks and the authorities have also been doing it," said a senior law enforcement official, who is involved in ongoing targeted operation. "This time, the federal government and military establishment are showing their seriousness for bringing peace in the city and they would not bow down to pressure from political parties – both in the government and opposition," he said.¹⁴

Impact in Karachi

Residents of Karachi have been feeling positive impact of ongoing operation in the city and it is largely believed that after announcement of the NAP, the operation had not only got a direction but also a support from the military, the federal government and other political parties.

Various reports on the crime statistics in Karachi show a significant decrease in target killings in the city after NAP. According to Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCPP), there has been a significant

¹⁰Mazhar Abbas, "Who is protecting Rs230 bn mafia?", The News, June 16, 2015,

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-323952-Who-is-protecting-Rs230-bn-mafia>

¹¹ "Rangers issue details of detained Sunni Tehreek activists", Dawn, June 23, 2015,

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1189973>

¹²Author's interview with Fahimuddin Shaikh, a spokesperson for the ST, July 25, 2015.

¹³Author's interview with a Karachi-based journalist Naimat Khan, July 25, 2015.

¹⁴Author's interview with a Karachi-based law enforcement official, July 23, 2015.

decrease in the number of target killings, both political and apolitical. From January to June 2015, 128 apolitical people were killed, making it a decrease of 68 percent from the last year's corresponding period, when 403 people were killed.¹⁵

Traders also appreciated significant decrease in instances of extortion and killings. They said that because of peace, this year's Eid shopping in Karachi broke the 10 years old record.¹⁶ According to a Pakistani TV channel, traders said a "total of Rs 90 billion had been invested on the occasion of Eid, adding that the sale of the goods exceeded their expectations".¹⁷

However, some raise questions on the intentions of the Rangers.

The HRCP has been showing its concern over Rangers' stay in the city

for a long time and demanding the government to strengthen the police, which is local and proactive and understand the city well. "Controlling law and order situation in the city is not key duty of Rangers and any responsibilities given to them should be temporary", said an HRCP's vice-chairperson. The HRCP, he said, have received many complaints against the paramilitary force for its alleged corruption and involvement in harassment of the people.¹⁸

The HRCP has also raised concerns over the increase in extrajudicial killings during the first half of 2015. With 38 killings in encounters, according to HRCP, there is a 19 percent increase in such killings from the same period in 2014 when the figure stood at 258.¹⁹

¹⁵ Zia Ur Rehman, "Rise in extrajudicial killings, fake encounters may undermine credibility of LEAs", *The News*, July 16, 2015,

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-4-329188-Rise-in-extrajudicial-killingsfake-encounters-may-undermine-credibility-of-LEAs>

¹⁶ Author's interviews with traders' leaders.

¹⁷ "Traders credit restoration of peace for record 70 bn Eid sale," *Dunya News*, July

19, 2015, <http://dunyanews.tv/index.php/en/Pakistan/289758-Karachi-Traders-credit-restoration-of-peace-for-r>.

¹⁸ Author's interview with Asad Iqbal Butt, the HRCP's vice-chairperson, July 22, 2015.

¹⁹ Zia Ur Rehman, "Rise in extrajudicial killings, fake encounters may undermine credibility of LEAs," *The News*, July 16, 2015.

Comprehensive review of NAP

Balochistan report card

*Shahzada Zulfiqar**

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The Balochistan-specific point calls for undertaking “the process of reconciliation” – with disgruntled Baloch. In addition, many other points have direct bearing on Balochistan, like of registering madrassas and ending private militias.

As with other provinces, NAP is reviewed at an apex committee, comprising province’s top civilian and military officials of the province. The committee met once under the Prime Minister and twice under the chairpersonship of Chief Minister Dr. Malik Baloch.

So far, six convicted persons have been sent to the gallows. A single military court is already working in Balochistan, following NAP. Balochistan’s home department has sent 53 cases to the interior ministry, over a two dozen of which have been sent to the military court.

In February 2014, apex committee met under Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, with Army Chief General Raheel Sharif as participant, drawing a roadmap of implementing NAP.

The meeting, because of being overwhelmed by the military high ups, approved for stern action against militants and their leaders, calling for negotiation with only those having no involvement in acts of sabotage and terrorism.

Stern action

The stern action includes a broad range of issues: military operation against militants; extradition of self-exiled Baloch leaders from western countries; and confiscation of their all moveable and immovable properties to choke financing to their outfits, already banned.

Besides these, federal agencies like Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), Customs, National Accountability Bureau, and Police have been directed to investigate into the funding of terrorists. Hawala operators, working under the garb of money-exchange business, are also interrogated, their tehsil records are scrutinized and their property details obtained.

In the cyber domain, the government has already blocked pro-separatist websites, blogs and Facebook accounts.

Pakistan Army was involved in military operation in the districts infested with the insurgency while Frontier Corps Balochistan, a paramilitary force, accelerated the pace of already-launched “information based operations” in the province.

The Frontier Corps claims to have killed hundreds of activists and dozens of commanders of banned organizations and arrested many more.

One of those it has been following is Dr. Allah Nazar, head of Baloch Liberation Front. Dr. Nazar is the only commander who leads his group on ground, compared to leaders who live abroad. Unlike other Baloch insurgent groups, BLF also draws significant support from middle-class – Allah Nazar himself is a medical specialist.

The government and military high-ups think that the on-going 5th Baloch insurgency is coming to an end in Balochistan. And that there will be no dissent voice, if Dr. Allah Nazar is killed.

On June 29th, 2015, on a tip of about the presence of most wanted man Dr. Allah Nazar, head of Baloch Liberation Front, a leading insurgent group, the army conducted an operation in Awaran district and killed his brother and two nephews along with other six villagers. However, the news about the presence of BLF commander proved wrong.

Political observers in the province also argue that the government needs to improve the law and order in the province by crushing the on-going separatist movement for paving the way for mega projects like operationalizing Gwadar port and laying down China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Reconciliation

Ever since coming into power in 2013, Prime Minister Sharif has been advocated for giving reconciliation efforts a chance. Sharif's desire has been of bringing on negotiating table all angry Baloch leaders – whether fighting against the state or not, whether sitting inside the country or living in self-exile.

Even the National Action Plan calls upon the provincial government to pursue reconciliation process in Balochistan.

But the February 2015 apex meeting called for negotiations with only those who have not taken arms against the state. Similarly, in June, an apex committee, headed by Chief Minister Malik Baloch, promised general amnesty for all those who forsake arms against the state.

According to this policy, one million rupees will be awarded for an ordinary fighter entering mainstream, one-and-a-half million for a local commander, and two million for area commander, and more for others as per to their status, besides promising them government job and security for them and their families.

Moreover, pro-government tribal sardars like Nawab Sanaullah Zehri; Nawab Chagaiz Marri, son of separatist late Khair Bakhsh Marri; and Sardar Sarfaraz Domki,

grandson of late Nawab Akbar Bugti played their due role in persuading the outlaws to surrender before the law.

Over one hundred fighters, including six commanders, have publicly surrendered from Awaran, Lahri and Kohlu.

One such commander is Obaidullah Babrak, a BLF fighter in Awaran. At the time of surrender, he moved to provincial capital Quetta. Within a few weeks of his surrender, in July, he complained in a press conference that the government hasn't fulfilled any of the promise announced under general amnesty. (The government argues there might be some misunderstanding.)

While the government takes such surrenders as game changer, Baloch nationalist groups have little faith in these tried-and-tested measures. They have been tried in the past too, they argue, adding that such measures aim at buying loyalties of the armed activists through money instead of addressing their genuine issues. Despite surrenders made by some of their commanders and members, separatist groups have rejected the amnesty offer, vowing to continue fighting till independence.

Baloch nationalists point towards dichotomy in dealing with

Balochistan: on one hand, the forces are killing Baloch youth through the 'kill-and-dump policy' or military operations; on the other hand, government offers reconciliation.¹

Such dichotomies continue to raise head in provincial government's other reconciliation efforts.

In the holy month of Ramadan, Chief Minister directed a delegation comprising provincial ministers and parliamentarians-cum-tribal elders of ruling National Party went to London to meet self-exiled Khan of Kalat, Mir Suleman Daud, urging him to return home for filling the tribal vacuum created in his absence.

Mir Suleman sits at the top of Baloch tribal hierarchy. His grandfather Mir Ahmad Yar Khan signed Instrument of Accession with country's founder Quaid-e-Azam, legalizing Balochistan's union with new state of Pakistan. Although Mir Suleman doesn't have influence over separatist outfits, he symbolizes tribal society. In 2006, in the aftermath of the assassination of prominent Baloch politician Akbar Bugti in a military operation, Mir Suleman left Pakistan.

At that time, he also conveyed a tribal jirga in Kalat, the only tribal jirga ever to be convened in the last century. That grand jirga, comprising 85 chieftains and over 300 elders from

¹ The word "kill and dump" is a common term used by nationalists.

all over country and other walks of life, gave Khan the mandate to approach International Court of Justice against Pakistan for its failure to abide by the Instrument of Accession reached by his grandfather. Winning over Khan will weaken the cause of separatists.

When a delegation from Pakistan went to see him in 2015, Khan put before them some conditions such as recovery of Baloch missing persons and putting an end to the on-going military operations in Balochistan, the so-called kill and dump policy, and the trample-down of the sanctity of '*chaddar* and *chardevari*' (household). Balochistan government is unable to meet the conditions of Khan.

As of now, Chief Minister Malik Baloch may lead another delegation to London for another round of talks with Khan of Kalat. To make Khan flexible in his conditions, the new delegation will offer some special perks and privileges to the Khan, if he returns.

Meanwhile, Nawab Sanaullah Zahri, a senior minister and provincial head of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, in his separate plan of reconciliation, is also trying his best to persuade Khan of Kalat into returning home. Quite likely, Mr. Zehri will be sworn in as the new chief minister, under an agreement reached between different parties in Murree after 2013 elections.

Pressing issues

Some of the issues from Balochistan are worth looking into, as they directly relate with NAP's other points:

One, when it comes to religious-inspired militancy, the basis of NAP, despite killings of top-notch militants, a lot needs to be done.

Following NAP, security forces killed top sectarian men like Usman Saifullah Kurd and Mahmood Kurd alias Wadeed, masterminds of deadly suicide attacks, killing hundreds of Shia Muslim in Balochistan and Sindh. Similarly, in August 2015, an important commander of Al-Qaeda's Umar Lateef was killed in Chaghi area bordering neighbouring Afghanistan, while his wife Tayyaba who is said to be head of women wing was arrested. Meanwhile, in Punjab, head of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi along with his accomplices was killed. That much is positive.

After these killings, one can expect from security agencies to bring such heinous elements in Balochistan to justice. There is a desire from the people that the forces need to move against banned outfits, which often wear political faces publicly in Balochistan.

Security forces have also raided on the shops in Quetta and other

districts and confiscated a dozen of books with hate material.

On the other hand, no action has been taken against the sectarian-infested madrassas.

According to a report of Home Department, 2,441 seminaries have been registered. Still, it is believed, around a thousand madrassas are yet to be registered in the far flung areas of the province.

Two, contrary to the claims of the officials, some government-backed private militias still operate across the province. Many Baloch nationalists believe these militias are controlled by the pro-government notables, against separatist groups.

The government-backed militias have also been accused of persecuting religious minorities, particularly Hindus, during the past 15 years of insurgency. Hindu traders in restive districts particularly Khuzdar, Kalat and Mastung were being forced to pay *bhatha* (extortion) to these private militias. They are intimidated against any protest publicly over forced conversion in the cases. Hundreds of Hindu families have forcibly migrated to India or neighbouring Sindh province. Curbing such groups will automatically improve the status of religious minorities, as called by NAP.

The activists of these militias have been involved in crimes like highway

robbery, rape, car snatching and abduction for ransom.

Officials said that they have come across enough evidence against one Shafiq Mengal, head of a government-backed militia, of harbouring sectarian and Pakistani Taliban militants. These militants have also attacked Levy personnel, killed eight. A case has also been registered against Shafiq, but he lives with impunity in his ancestral town of Wadh in Khuzdar district.

Sardar Akhtar Mengal, the head of Balochistan National Party, which believes in parliamentary struggle, has been a harsh critic of intelligence agencies for erecting private militias against him and his party.

Three, another major issue Baloch population is confronted with is the illegal registration of millions of Afghan refugees as Pakistani nationals and as voters. Baloch nationalists, including Dr. Malik, are opposing the next census to be conducted in 2016 on the grounds of the presence of Afghan refugee, estimated to be two-and-an half million in Balochistan.

Except for the ruling National Party, no Baloch party is in the favour of making Gwadar port operational and constructing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Baloch parties call for addressing their reservations of the projects, which, they fear, will turn the Baloch population into a minority in their own land.

The military high-ups in apex committee meetings have assured provincial government to inform its concerns to their top brass and federal government. Pashtun parties, often symbolized by the Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP), reject these reservations.

Action against sectarian terrorists

*Safdar Sial**

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National Action Plan talks about taking stern action against sectarian terrorists and elements spreading sectarianism. With regards to that, a review of actions taken by the federal and provincial governments thus far suggests that they have largely security or counter-terrorism orientation. However one should be hopeful that sooner or later scope of these actions will be expanded to address factors which promote sectarian extremist mindset and faith-based intolerance and persecution in Pakistani society.

Action

While sharing his views on NAP implementation with media, on August 24, Federal Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan said his government's efforts had brought terrorism down by 70 percent. He stated that fighting and cracking down religious, sectarian terrorist groups is now a top priority of the government.¹ The interior minister also counted his government's actions against the misuse of loudspeakers and propagation of hate speech and literature.

Indeed action against hate speech and literature—which are main propagation tools employed by both violent and non-violent sectarian organizations—was launched immediately after NAP was

announced. A media report in January said that Punjab was far ahead in taking such actions where 329 were arrested against hate speech—a number that surged to 4,000 until August. Furthermore, the report said, 1,471 people were arrested, until January, in Punjab and 14 in Islamabad over misuse of loudspeakers.² The Punjab government has also launched an extensive campaign of sealing shops selling hate material and confiscating such material. In recent weeks and months, other provinces have also stepped up efforts against hate speech and literature.

Some sectarian terrorists or those found involved in sectarian target killing were also among those executed after a moratorium on death penalty was lifted in December last year. According to media reports, more than 200 persons have been executed so far including the following who were convicted in different cases of sectarian targeted killing.

- Attaullah Arif Qasim and Muhammed Azam Arif Sharif were hanged on February 3 for their role in the sectarian killing of a Shia

¹ “No terrorist network left capable of operating in Pakistan: Nisar,” *Dawn*, August 25, 2015.

²Khawar Ghumman, “Punjab ahead of other provinces in anti-terror steps,” *Dawn*, January 24, 2015.

physician in Karachi in 2001.³

- Convicted in 2004, Ikramul Haq alias Akram Lahori, a co-founder of Sunni sectarian group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), was executed in Lahore on January 17 for killing a guard at a Shia mosque.⁴
- Ghulam Shabbir and Ahmed Ali—who reportedly belonged to Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan—were hanged on January 7 in Multan.⁵ They were executed for a string of killings, including a police chief and his driver.
- Muhammad Saeed Awan, a member of the LeJ, was hanged at Karachi's Central Jail on January 15. Awan was convicted of shooting to death police officer Sadiq Hussain Shah and his son, Abid Hussain Shah, in 2001.⁶

- On September 2, an ISPR statement said “the COAS has confirmed death sentence of another five hardcore terrorists.” Reportedly two among the convicts were members of LeJ and involved in sectarian killings in Quetta.⁷

According to data compiled by Pak Institute for Peace Studies' (PIPS) digital database unit, around 20 major search-and-hunt operations were launched between January and August 15 this year against sectarian groups across Pakistan. A total of 133 key members and affiliates of sectarian groups were arrested mainly those belonging to Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ) (91) and LeJ (31).⁸ Those arrested also included ASWJ central president Maulana Aurangzeb Farooqi, who was detained on June 5 near Taxila.

Most of these arrests were made in Sindh, mainly in Karachi, and in Chakwal, Rawalpindi, Lahore and Jhang districts of Punjab on the main

³ Saroop Ejaz, “Dispatches: Pakistan's misguided approach to extremism,” Human Rights Watch, February 4, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/02/04/dispatches-pakistans-misguided-approach-extremism>.

⁴ “Akram Lahori executed in Lahore,” *The Nation*, January 17, 2015.

⁵ Amjad Ali, “Pakistan hangs two militants from outlawed sectarian group,” Reuters, January 7, 2015.

⁶ “Two convicts executed in Lahore,” *Pakistan Today*, January 15, 2015.

⁷ Baqir Sajjad Syed, “Army chief endorses 5 death sentences,” *Dawn*, September 3, 2015.

⁸ PIPS database on conflict and security, available at: <http://san-pips.com/index.php?action=db&id=1>.

charges of detainees' involvement in sectarian violence; target killing; distribution of hate literature; and support and facilitation to sectarian outfits. Such arrests however remained minimal in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces.

Similarly some key commanders of violent sectarian groups have been killed by security forces and law enforcement agencies since the announcement of NAP. On February 15, a top commander of the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi Usman Saifullah Kurd, and his companion were killed in a clash with paramilitary troops of FC in Quetta.⁹ Kurd was reportedly the main man behind killing of Hazara Shias in Quetta. In July, LeJ chief Malik Ishaq, his two sons Usman and Haq Nawaz, and 11 other militants were killed in an alleged exchange of fire with police personnel in Muzaffargarh, Punjab.

Apart from that, ongoing military operation in Karachi has also considerably weakened Sunni and Shia sectarian groups operating there.

Madrassas are described by many as breeding ground of sectarianism.

Little efforts were made under NAP to reform madrassa curricula, faculties and environment, which as a whole, make these institutions of religious education sectarian-oriented. Minister for Religious Affairs and Inter-Faith Harmony Sardar Mohammad Yousaf recently stated that no progress was made on the front of madrassa reforms since 2000 - the era of Gen Parvez Musharraf.¹⁰

In recent weeks, law enforcers have raided different madrassas across Pakistan on the suspicion of their links to support for militants. Similarly, Punjab and Balochistan have completed geo-tagging of madrassas while KP and Sindh are engaged in the process.¹¹

In a significant move, the top civilian and military leadership including army chief and prime minister held a meeting with representatives of religious seminaries on August 7, which indicated that the issue of madrassa reforms will now be taken seriously.¹² One day before this meeting, interior minister had said that seminaries will not be allowed to spread sectarian hatred and issue fatwas declaring others infidels.

⁹*Express Tribune*, February 16, 2015, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/839045/top-lej-commander-killed-in-quetta-gunfight>.

¹⁰ Khawar Ghumman, "30 seminaries closed, says minister," *Dawn*, August 10, 2015.

¹¹Zahid Gishkori, "Sindh, G-B try to geo-tag religious seminaries," *Express Tribune*, July 5, 2015.

¹² Khawar Ghumman, "Govt won't space errant seminaries, ulema told," *Dawn*, August 8, 2015.

At the same time, Pakistan's decision of staying away from Yemen crisis was also partly meant to preempt any sectarian backlash of the conflict in Pakistan. While denying Saudi request to join combat forces against Shia Houthis in Yemen, Pakistani parliamentarians also took into consideration the ongoing counter-terrorism campaign in the country. At the same time, after the announcement of NAP, criticism of Saudi Arabia's alleged funding to madrassas and violent sectarian groups in Pakistan has also increased. According to media reports, a group of experts had recommended to a NAP committee that Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates should be asked to stop funding the banned religious, sectarian groups in Pakistan.¹³

Impact

Search-and-hunt and operational strikes by security forces and law enforcement agencies and other measures taken by the state as part of NAP, as cited earlier, have put the

militants, including sectarian, under tremendous pressure. Killing of some main leaders of sectarian outfits and arrests of their members and leaders have certainly weakened their infrastructure. Secondly, due to mounting pressure following the Peshawar school attack last year, supporters and facilitators of sectarian terrorists have also become very cautious in their attitude.

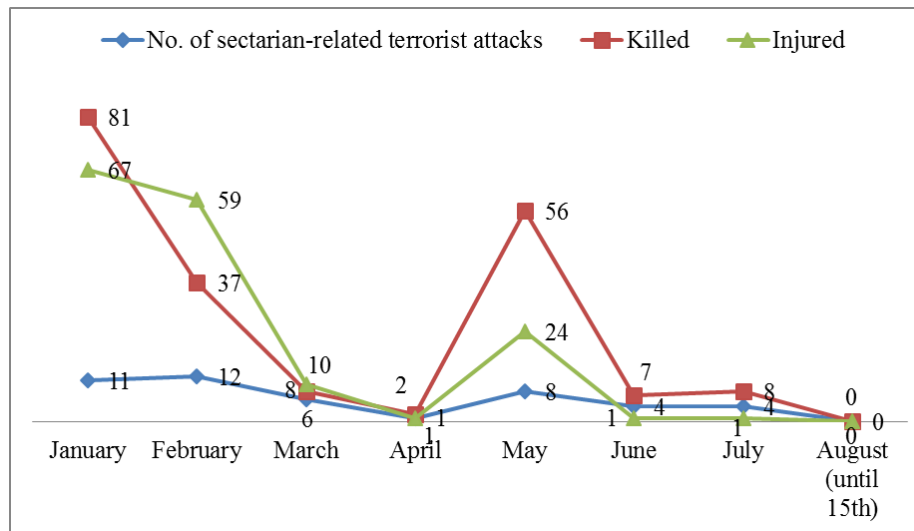
The number of sectarian-related terrorist attacks and clashes has also significantly decreased following January 2015. (*See Chart 1*) Between January 1 and August 15 this year, a total of 46 sectarian-related terrorist attacks took place in Pakistan, which were 53 percent less than such attacks recorded during the corresponding period of 2014.¹⁴ Out of a total 46 reported sectarian-related attacks in 2015, 25 targeted Shia and 17 Sunni religious scholars and members of respective religious organizations; two attacks hit worship places and shrines and one attack each targeted members of Bohra and Ismaili communities.¹⁵

¹³ Zahid Gishkori, "National Action Plan: Pakistan in fresh push to choke terror funding," *Express Tribune*, January 10, 2015.

¹⁴ Statistics are based on PIPS database on conflict and security, available at: <http://san-pips.com/index.php?action=db&id=1>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Sectarian violence in Pakistan (January 1 to August 15, 2015)

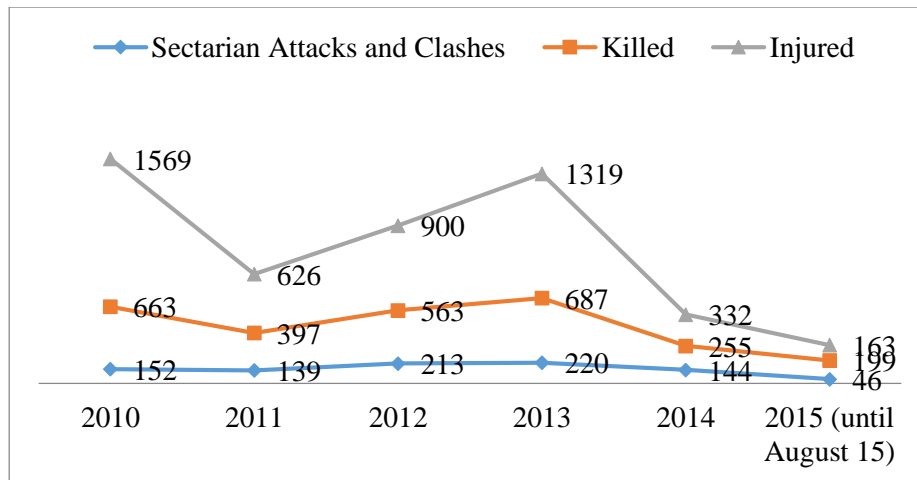


Although frequency of sectarian-related attacks has decreased in 2015, yet sectarian militants and their allies such as Pakistani Taliban and Jundullah were successful in launching some major attacks during the year. A lethal suicide blast in Shikarpur in January targeted an *imambargah* and killed 63 people. A suicide attack in an *imambargah* in Hayatabad area of Peshawar on February 13 killed 23 civilian and left

48 injured. Later in May, over 43 people lost their lives in a sectarian-related attack on Ismaili community in Karachi.

However, on the whole, incidents of sectarian violence, including attacks and clashes, have posted a considerable decline in 2015 when compared to previous years. (See Chart 2)

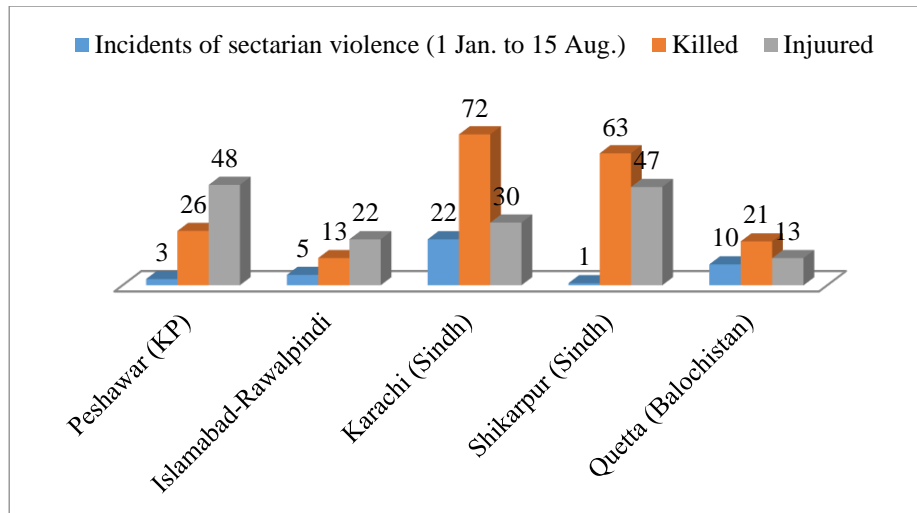
Chart 3: Trends of sectarian violence in Pakistan (2010-2015)



Nonetheless, trends of sectarian violence in 2015 indicated that all four provinces of Pakistan were vulnerable to the threat. That calls for

equally stringent efforts by all the provinces as well as federal government.

Chart 3: Sectarian flashpoints in Pakistan in 2015



Way forward

Experts believe that sectarianism is a structural problem attached to Pakistan's religious-ideological discourse. They argue that violent and non-violent sectarian actors will continue posing challenges in security and politico-ideological perspectives for a longer period of time. However, with concerted and comprehensive state efforts the threat can be reduced to a minimal level. Actions taken under NAP need to be strengthened and made broader in scope to include measures which stop madrassas and sectarian actors from promoting extremist narratives and causing ideological radicalization among respective sects.

The recent meetings of Pakistan's civilian and military leaders with prominent religious leaders and representatives of madrasa educational boards is perhaps first of its kind, which conveyed state's newfound resolve and message that religious extremism, including sectarian, will not be tolerated any more. That is evident from the fact that apart from prime minister and interior minister, army chief and DG ISI also participated in the meeting. There is a need for converting this 'message' into some institutional and

functional mechanism of reform. Secondly, although government actions have weakened or deterred sectarian terrorist groups, they still pose threat of sectarian violence. Security forces and law enforcement agencies should enhance their efforts across Pakistan, in collaboration with intelligence agencies, to further weaken and dismantle sectarian terrorist infrastructure. As described earlier in the report, sectarian groups have managed to launch major attacks in 2015 in almost all parts of the country. Also, their nexus with local and international terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda needs to be broken. The Islamic State has also been inspiring Pakistan's militant groups including LeJ and Jundullah having anti-Shia sectarian objectives. At the same time, there are little-known cells of violent sectarian groups which they form on a temporary basis for carrying out specific activities. For instance, the law enforcement agencies have discovered many of such cells including Al-Mukhtar group, the Punjabi Taliban and the Khurooj group in their crackdown on the LeJ in Karachi.¹

Thirdly, sectarian groups have a history of using political umbrella to survive in the face of government's action. For instance ASWJ, which is

¹ Zia Ur Rehman, "Vengeful LeJ, its affiliates may strike in Karachi," *The News*, July 30, 2015.

reportedly reincarnation of the banned Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, is currently trying to enhance its political credentials. The group, led by Ahmad Ludhianvi, showed insignificant reaction to the July 30 killing of LeJ chief Malik Ishaq in a reported police encounter in Punjab. The group claims that it does 'not support arson, terrorism and aggression'.² Many believe that that is only a political statement because the ASWJ is engaged in fighting with Shia sectarian groups mainly in Karachi and Rawalpindi-Islamabad where many of its members have also been target killed in recent months and years.

Similarly, in the recently held PK-95 by-polls in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Pakistan Rah-e-Haq Party (PRHP) surfaced as the third political party, which was founded in February 2012 by Hakeem Muhammad Ibrahim Qasmi, a former provincial leader of banned Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP).³

Government needs to ensure that no violent sectarian group is able to use political cover to advance its sectarian agenda. Also, religious-political parties should be discouraged from using sectarian narratives for political gains.

² Kalbe Ali, "Malik Ishaq had serious differences with Ludhianvi: observers," *Dawn*, August 25, 2015.

³ Zia Ur Rehman, "Ominous signs: the rise of Pakistan Rah-e-Haq Party," *The News on Sunday*, May 31, 2015.

Comprehensive review of NAP

Afghan refugees and NAP

*Rauf Khan Khattak**

* Rauf Khattak served as secretary of the federal government and as Chief Commissioner Afghan Refugees.

The National Action Plan (NAP) is uttered with such feelings of achievement as if it was the last bullet lodged between the eyes of the last militant standing. Yet, a close reading makes one wonder if the attempt is to indulge in number games of adding point after point to NAP with no particular relevance to the issue.

Let me return to one such issue, the place of Afghan refugees, a NAP point. In its entirety, the point calls for formulation of a policy that deals with Afghan refugees, starting off with their registration.

Even if the point was conveniently left out of the document, the government's anti-terror plan would still not be hurt.

Convenient excuse

Afghans came to Pakistan mostly in 1980s in the aftermath of war in their country. At the peak, 4.4 million Afghan refugees lived in Pakistan. Their sheer number made Pakistan one of the largest recipients of refugees in the world. At one point, the country hosted 21% of the world's refugees, overwhelmingly, Afghans.

Despite being a non-signatory to the Geneva Convention of Refugees, Pakistan, in a considered policy, threw open its borders to the Afghans, who were encouraged to

cross over and embraced as "brothers in faith". Ever since we are working closely with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international agencies under agreed protocols and looking after them.

Moreover, from 1979-80 till 1991, the same refugees were our *mujahideen* (holy warriors). We launched them against their own country. The UNHCR and the world are equally culpable in violation of stated international law on refugees. Again, from 1991 onwards, we played a big role in their internal squabbles. And yet, none of us seemed to have any issue with that.

But, now, the presence of about 2.6 million Afghan refugees in the country is causing a great deal of heart burning, some because of racial and economic reasons, others because of their perceived involvement in crimes and militancy.

Admittedly, refugees all over the world cause problems for the host countries. They are considered a burden. These days, Europe, despite its riches, is trying to turn into a fortress refusing entry and rehabilitation of a few hundred thousand asylum seekers. Same can be seen in our attitude towards Afghan refugees.

But to attribute all our present ills – crimes, drugs, weapons, militancy

etc. – to Afghan refugees is a mistake. Yes, some of them are involved in crimes, but how many?

The case of their involvement in militancy is weak. The National Action Plan was primarily focused on militancy in Pakistan, after the ghoulish attack on December 16th, 2014 on Army Public School in Peshawar in which 164 young students lost their lives. The attack has hardly anything to do with Afghans, as all the attackers were Pakistanis.

Thus, to say that Pakistan would have been one of the most stable and safe country, without Afghan refugees, is wrong conclusion. Pakistan would have been facing much ordeal, had 2.6 million refugees turned the militant path. Majority Afghan refugees are abiding their time peacefully, doing menial jobs.

The law-enforcement agencies, despite their worst criticism of refugees, have never been able to produce any figures on their involvement in crimes. Blaming refugees is a convenient excuse. For the police these hapless people are milch cows. What rather needs to be checked in is the exploitation of both registered and unregistered refugees by police. There is no voice to express their exploitation.

Registering Afghans

At present, the number of registered Afghans in Pakistan is 1.6 million; in addition, over a million undocumented Afghans live Pakistan, according to the Commissioner of Afghan Refugees (CAR).

Lately, it is said the issue is less about registered Afghan refugees than unregistered one. The Ministry of States and Frontier Regions was quick to follow up the NAP point to formulate a comprehensive policy to deal with the issue of Afghan refugees, beginning with their registration.

Apparently, the architects of NAP did not know that a policy already existed.

Pakistan's policy towards Afghan refugees is shaped by the Tripartite Agreement, signed by Pakistan, Afghanistan and UNHCR. The agreement, which calls for voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees was first signed in Brussels in March 2003 and has been renewed since then. As of now, it is valid till 31 December, 2015.

Still, on March 10th, 2015, a bilateral meeting took place between Pakistani and Afghan officials at SAFRON ministry. The two governments agreed to document the unregistered Afghan refugees with technical support by National

Database Registration Authority, the country's identity-card issuing authority, and verification by Afghan authorities; constituted a committee of three members each from Pakistan and Afghanistan to work out the modalities of documentation; charted out a common strategy and plan involving Pakistan, Afghanistan and UNHCR, with clear timelines keeping in view the absorption capacity of Afghanistan; and endorsed the Enhanced Voluntary Return and Registration Package (EVRRP) for Afghans.¹

Just day after the SAFRON meeting, on March 11th, 2015, the 25th Tripartite Committee meeting was held in Islamabad. The Committee reaffirmed their commitment to the voluntary repatriation of the refugees in safety and dignity keeping in view the enabling environment in Afghanistan. It was agreed that full and effective integration of refugees in Afghanistan will be a gradual and challenging endeavour. It was also agreed that the new reform agenda of Afghanistan will include the returning refugees.

Then, there is another committee, of four players, one more than the tripartite now. This committee, the Quadripartite Steering Committee, also include Iran, another host of Afghan refugees. The quadripartite committee met in Tehran on May 19th, 2015 and endorsed the Solution

Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR), which calls for voluntary return and sustainable integration and assistance to host countries.

The process of documentation of unregistered Afghan refugees was expected to start in July-August this year, according to Commissioner of Afghan Refugees but this seems to have been delayed. The Ministry of Finance has released 150 million rupees to NADRA for this purpose.

The progress thus made is quick and satisfactory. But the point is, as one can glean from the above, it has little bearing on the effort against militancy.

Generous host

International refugee law is governed by the 1951 Geneva Convention of Refugees or its additional 1967 Protocol. According to these, as long as a refugee conforms to the laws, regulations and public order of the host country, that person is not to be discriminated on the basis of race, religion or country of origin. The personal status of a refugee, such as in marriage, is to be governed by the country of domicile, or in case of no domicile, the law of the country of residence.

The foremost principle governing the international refugee law is the principle of *non-refoulement*, a

¹It is US\$200 per individual and US\$1200 per family.

French word meaning “no forced expulsion”. The return of the refugee has to be on voluntary basis and in a dignified manner.

Although Pakistan is not a signatory to these codes, its policy, as discussed above, calls for voluntary repatriation.

Still, ever since the NAP has been announced, Afghan refugees in Pakistan have once again come under the radar of law-enforcement agencies.

This happens as the world conscience has been shaken by fate of asylum seekers in the Mediterranean and in the Indian Ocean. Chaotic and shameful scenes are on display in mainland Europe splashed by TV screens around the world. The EU is paralysed and has failed to come up with a united response to this human tragedy. Similarly, the south eastern Asian countries looked the other way from the dying Rohingyas and desperate Bengalis left to drift on the sea.

Compared with the current global apathy and callousness towards migrants, Pakistan, Turkey and Lebanon have earned praise of the world by hosting millions of refugees running from war. Pakistan comes out as a star for hosting millions of refugees for the longest period in history.

We should not squander the goodwill.

Tahir Saeen Group: higher-degree militants

*Farhan Zahid**

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On May 13, a group of militants in police uniforms intercepted a bus near Safoora Goth, a suburb of Karachi near Karachi University. The bus was carrying minority Ismaili Shias.¹ Six of them entered the bus, one of them over the driver's seat and another guarded the vehicle door. The other four started indiscriminate firing for 10 to 12 minutes.² Forty three people were killed in the massacre.³

No one could deny the involvement of sectarian groups in the killing. What wasn't clear was the exact group behind the attack.

Initial reports pointed towards the involvement of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, popularly known by its acronym ISIS or Arabic translation Daish. The group's sworn ally in Pakistan, Jundullah, based in Karachi, was quick to claim responsibility of the attack.⁴ The perpetrators of the attacks had also dropped leaflets of the ISIS at the spot, displaying their affection to it. Perhaps because ISIS indulges in

sectarian bloodbath, its involvement seemed plausible.

As police progressed in its investigation, the ISIS connection got weakened. Instead, some members of the attackers were in contact with Ayman Al-Zawahiri, leader of Al-Qaeda, which didn't endorse ISIS's claim of militant caliphate. What's more, it emerged that the cell that carried out the attack was linked to AQ's branch in the Indian subcontinent, Al-Qaeda in Subcontinent (AQIS), formed recently to ward off ISIS's luring of South Asia's militant groups.⁵

A police officer said the accused militants established their own group in 2014 without naming it. Hence, it was referred by the cell leader's name, Tahir Saeen, who ordered most of the terrorist activities. His second-in-command Saad Aziz, aka Tun Tun or John, masterminded many attacks. The cell's activities largely revolved around them. Investigators found that the two, like many other of the cell's members, hailed from diverse socio-economic

¹ Ismailism is a branch of Shia Islam and commonly known as Seveners which means unlike traditional Shias who believe in 12 Imams (faith leaders) the Ismailis believe in seven.

² Salis bin Perwaiz, "Safoora Goth attackers were inspired by IS," *The News International*, July 2, 2015, <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-4-326642-Safoora-Goth-attackers-were-inspired-b>.

³ Imtiaz Ali, "43 killed in attack on bus carrying Ismailis in Karachi," *Dawn*, May 14, 2015.

⁴ Faraz Khan, "Macabre violence: Ugly face of terror," *Express Tribune*, May 14, 2015.

⁵ Hafeez Tunio, "Arrested Safoora Goth attack mastermind behind Sabeen's murder," *Express Tribune*, May 20, 2015.

backgrounds with sound educational credentials.

Anatomy of the cell

The Tahir Saeen group has all the traits of a classic terrorist group: few members but high expertise.

The group, which was involved in orchestrating more than 15 terrorist attacks in Karachi, has never more than 15-20 members. That was one reason why the cell remained out of the radar of police and other security agencies for a very long period of time.

Members of the group were trained in bomb manufacture, assassinations, reconnaissance, counter intelligence and counter interrogation. Part of their 'expertise' owes to their high technical education, including in engineering. Strikingly, their leader Tahir was a high school dropout.

	Cell member	Educational background	Expertise
1	Abdul Rehman Shujaat	B. Sc. Engineering from N.E.D Engineering University, Karachi	
2	Saad Aziz	BBA from Institute of Business Administration, Karachi	Dealt with propaganda; translated material, managed pro-
3	Azhar Ishrat	B.Sc. Electronic Engineering from Sir Syed University, Karachi	Expert in bomb making
4	Tahir Minhas	Matriculate	Group's leader, involved in planning and executing terror plots
5	Hafiz Nasir	Masters in Islamic Studies from University of Karachi	Involved in planning and executing terror plots
6	Asadur Rehman	Graduate	

The cell was assisted by one female collaborator Saadia, who is still at large. According to police sources Saadia is wife of a local Al-Qaeda commander and was tasked for recruitment of potential jihadis.¹ Some of the other assailants are at still not apprehended.

What bound these myriad individuals together was strong ideology, reflective in their hatred of the West and minorities.

Some say the cell's members were either linked to AQ or inspired by it. Others say the cell wanted to affiliate with the ISIS.² According to some experts, the cell members might be affiliated with Al-Qaeda but because of the growing popularity of ISIS in jihadi circles they had ambitions to network their cell with ISIS.³ Apparently, the cell members were part of Al-Qaeda's sleeper network, as at least one member (Tahir Minhas) had personally met AQ's top leaders in Afghanistan.

Still, what is established is the group's belief in the notion of *tafkir*, declaring other Muslims apostate. That notion, evident in both AQ's

and ISIS's philosophy, was carried by the Tahir group, too.

The cell members, following the cardinal principle of plausible deniability among terror outfits, deliberately did not know each other's real name. Instead, they called each other through aliases. The group was quite careful in recruiting new members. That was one reason the group swelled to a handful of members during its life span.

Subsequent investigations found that each one of cell members had participated in the Safoora Goth attack, having worked for months on the possibilities of targeting the community service bus. According to police, the cell members planned and rehearsed for two months and visited the location seven times. They kept monitoring the bus passing through the same route, over and over, and finally prepared a map with circling points of deployment of cell members.

The equipment recovered from cell members included TT pistols, Kalashnikovs, laptops, explosive material, jihad literature, and hit lists of media personnel, fashion

¹"Probe reveals involvement of female terror suspect in group behind Safoora incident," Such TV, June 3, 2015, <http://www.suchtv.pk/pakistan/sindh/item/23998-probe-reveals-involvement-of-female-terror-suspect-in-group-behind-safoora-incident.html>.

² Imtiaz Ali, "IS-inspired militants behind Safoora carnage, Sabeen Mahmud murder," *Dawn*, July 1, 2015.

³ Author's interview with Amir Rana, expert on terrorism and security issues, Islamabad.

designers, NGO workers, and law enforcement agencies personnel.⁴

Although the group came under the radar after the Safoora Goth incident, it had masterminded several other attacks in Karachi in recent months including targeted assassination of NGO worker Sabeen Mehmud in April 2015; firing and critically wounding American Professor Dr Debra Lobo in April 2015; suicide attack on Brigadier Basit of Sindh Rangers in February 2015 (Brigadier Basit narrowly escaped while four others were injured in the attack); grenade attacks on private co-education institutes in February and March 2015; targeted killing of some workers of secular political party Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) and members of Bohra community;⁵ and bomb attacks on police patrolling parties and targeted killing of police personnel in at least five different locations in the city.⁶

An odd leader

Safoora Goth attack was the brainchild of cell's leader Tahir Minhas, who apparently seemed an odd element in the cell: he hailed from Punjab, unlike many others who came from Karachi; and being a simple matriculate, he was the least educated of other members. Yet, he was the cell's main planner, founder, and lynchpin. The cell he founded was in fact known by his name, Tahir Saeen group.⁷

Tahir had earlier worked for AQIS under Jalal, a cousin of Ramzi Yousaf, the main perpetrator of 1993 World Trade Center bombing, disclosed a senior Karachi police officer.⁸ Even now, investigators found, Jalal cell of AQ exists, most probably in Baloch-populated Lyari area of Karachi. Tahir Saeen formed his own cell, after breaking from Jalal cell.⁹

Tahir's connections with Al-Qaeda dated back to 1990s. Much before the 9/11 attacks, he visited Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, where, besides getting trained at AQ-run camps, he

⁴ Hafeez Tunio, "Arrested Safoora attack mastermind behind Sabeer's murder: Sindh CM," *Express Tribune*, May 20, 2015.

⁵ "Umar Kaathio Al-Qaeda Sindh's head, reveal Safoora terrorists," *Dunya News*, June 22, 2015, <http://dunyanews.tv/index.php/en/Pakistan/285507-Umar-Kaathio-Al-Qaeda-Sindh-head-reveal-Safoora>.

⁶ Hafeez Tunio, "Arrested Safoora Goth mastermind behind Sabeen's murder."

⁷ Salis bin Perwaiz, "Safoora Goth attackers were inspired by IS," *The News International*, June 2, 2015.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Imtiaz Ali, "Safoora bus attack suspects wanted to establish their links with IS," *Dawn*, July 2, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1191674>.

personally met AQ's leader Osama Bin Laden and ideologue Ayman al-Zawahiri several times.¹⁰

A veteran jihadi, Tahir was in contact with AQ's Pakistani leaders, including the emir of Sindh province, Umar Kaathio, a resident of Kotri district. Minhas says that he joined Al-Qaeda on Kaathio's advice.¹¹ The two had even worked in Hyderabad district.

It was in Hyderabad that Tahir started colluding with Saad Aziz, and launched terror attacks at police parties and killed seven police officers, three members of Bohri community, and three workers MQM.¹² In 2006, in Hyderabad, Minhas was arrested for killing a Hindu boy but later released in 2009 and shifted to Karachi.¹³

When he had first come to Karachi, he faced difficulty in recruiting people. Eventually, with the support of Hafiz Nasir, a Jamaat-e-Islami member, Tahir managed to form his cell, which conducted score of terrorist activities, without even

coming close to police. According to Karachi police, Tahir has been involved in terrorist activities since 1998 and acquired special expertise in using Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG).

After the Safoora Goth attacks, he was finally arrested from Bahawalpur, southern Punjab.¹⁴

Second-in-command

Saad Aziz, a Karachite, was highly educated, with upper-class-urban family background. Unlike Minhas, Aziz was born and raised in Karachi to an educated Punjabi family long settled in Karachi. His father, himself a business graduate, had worked for a multinational corporation Unilever as Executive Director, in Karachi.

Aziz did his O-levels from Beacon House School and A-levels from Lyceum School, both elite schools in Karachi. Saad qualified the highly-competitive entry exam of the country's leading business school, the Institute of Business

¹⁰ Hafeez Tunio, "Arrested Safoora attack mastermind behind Sabeer's murder: Sindh CM," *Express Tribune*, May 20, 2015; "Pakistan's educated jihadis," Deutsche Welle, May 22, 2015, <http://www.dw.com/en/pakistans-educated-jihadists/a-18467631>.

¹¹ "Umar Kaathio Al-Qaeda Sindh's head, reveal Safoora terrorists," *Dunya News*, June 22, 2015, <http://dunyanews.tv/index.php/en/Pa>

kistan/285507-Umar-Kaathio-Al-Qaeda-Sindh-head-reveal-Safoora.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Naimat Khan, "Killers of Ismailis, Sabeen arrested Al-Qaeda network of graduates behind Safoora, Mahmud's killings," *Frontier Post*, <http://www.thefrontierpost.com/article/print/300418/killers-of-ismailis-sabeen-arrested-al-qaeda-network-of-graduates-behind-safoora-mahmud-s-killings>.

Administration (IBA),¹⁵ in Bachelor of Business Administration, which he completed in 2011.¹⁶¹⁷

At the IBA, initially, he was a usual undergraduate student. He was fond of football, had girl friends, and hung out with friends on regular basis. His grades in the first two years were reasonably good, too. But then, mid-ways, Saad drifted towards radicalization. Slowly and gradually, he disconnected himself from all of his previous friends.

It emerged that Saad was coming under the influence of Iqra Society at the IBA, a religious reading and discussion group. Disconnected with old friends, Saad maintained contacts with his new friends.

Iqra Society's role in radicalizing him has been ignored by the law-enforcement bodies.

From its website, the Society seems a look-alike of Hizbut Tahrir, which promotes Islamist values amongst the educated, liberal, and affluent students. As Deputy Inspector General of Police, Karachi South, said, "Al Qaeda subcontinent is a

splinter group, a mixture of al Qaeda and Hizbut Tahrir. Hizbut Tahrir is not violent, but this group is using their ideology and literature."¹⁸

The Society organizes guest lecture at the IBA where Islamist speakers are invited to speak about the Muslim way of life.¹⁹ The Society appears to be thoroughly Islamist, as reflected in its vision, which "attempt[s] to establish the realization among the students of IBA that Islam is not merely a religion, but the complete code of life and provides us with the best solution for our every sphere of life including our academics and the corporate world."²⁰

Among their past events, according to its website, the Society raised the plight of jailed Islamist terrorist Dr Afia Siddiqui and highlighted her case at their forum, where former British journalist Mariam Ridley also spoke. Mariam, formerly Yvonne Ridley, had converted to Islam after her captivity by Taliban in 2001 and became an outspoken supporter of Taliban and Al-Qaeda. According to the Society's website, Ridley later visited Fouzia Siddiqui, sister of Dr Afia, at her house in Karachi.²¹ For its

¹⁵ Current President of Pakistan Mamnoon Hussain and former Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz studied at IBA Karachi.

¹⁶ "Saad Aziz confesses to Sabeen's murder for holding Valentine's Day rally," *Express Tribune*, May 22, 2015.

¹⁷ Author's discussions with IBA students.

¹⁸ "Good degrees and Kalashnikovs," *Express Tribune*, May 21, 2015.

¹⁹ Sidrah Roghay, "The many shades of Saad Aziz," *The Friday Times*, June 5, 2015.

²⁰ Official website of IBA Iqra Society, <http://iqra.iba.edu.pk/aboutus.html>.

²¹ Official website of IBA Iqra Society, <http://iqra.iba.edu.pk/events.html>.

apparent links with former members of Jamaat-e-Islami such as Fouzia Siddiqui, the Society appears to be a conduit of Jamaat's student wing at the IBA Karachi, where, otherwise, student politics is strictly prohibited.

During his stay with the Society, he translated anti-Shia sect hate speeches of Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, the founder of anti-Shia organization Sipah-e-Sahaba in late 1980s. He gave Jhangvi's speech the title "The men who rocked Kufr."²²

Aziz's sectarian overture also runs through the Society's magazine, *Al-Rashideen* too, which he, along with eight others, edited and published at the IBA. Introducing the first issue of the magazine, he termed it a "platform where relevant issues facing the Ummah are studied and analysed upon by students of colleges and universities, and Muslim youngsters whose first or second language is English."²³

Iqra Society exposed Saad to the writings of ultra-radical Islamist ideologue Sayyid Qutb. Saad once asked his friend, "Have you read *Milestones* by Sayyid Qutb? It has changed my life."²⁴ His friends even believe that Saad might have gone to

jihad training too, "he went somewhere for a few months. Someone said he had gone for jihad training."²⁵

Commenting on Saad's transformation, one of his former schoolmates from Lyceum days wrote:

"Saad never had a group. He could be seen floating from one group of friends to another, never really seeming like he belonged to any one in particular. He tried his luck on the 'dabo' board, spent a few weeks on the foosball table and even attempted to join the drama gang, but he remained on the periphery...The extremists may be able to offer him something that our schooling system was unable to: a group of people where we felt valued, where we have purpose."²⁶

Aziz alongside cell's Emir Tahir Minhas planned and executed terrorist attacks. Saad's grasp over English language, sound educational background and being a local Karachite gave him an advantage over other cell members. He was more interested in targeting westerners and westernized Pakistanis (which he himself was once).

²² Ibid

²³ "Good degrees and Kalashnikovs," *Express Tribune*, May 21, 2015.

²⁴ Naeem Sahoutara, "Eyewitness identifies Saad Aziz as American professor's primary shooter," *Express Tribune*, June 27, 2015.

²⁵ "Saad Aziz confesses to Sabeen's murder for holding Valentine's Day rally," *Express Tribune*, May 22, 2015.

²⁶ Shehzad Ghais, "My friend from IBA, an extremist?," *Express Tribune*, May 27, 2015.

In April 2015, for instance, he planned and executed the attack on Debra Lobo, an American professor at Karachi's Jinnah Dental College.²⁷ She was critically injured in the attack.

His other target didn't survive: Sabeen Mehmud, Director of The Second Floor (T2F), who publicly condemned religious extremism, was shot five times.²⁸ Aziz confessed of the murder, saying,

"We shot her for holding a Valentine's Day rally. ... My friend was riding the motorcycle but I was sitting at the back and I shot her. ... When she sat in the car after her Balochistan seminar [which she had hosted], I followed her and when her car stopped at Sunset Boulevard signal I shot her. ... We followed her for days and gathered information on her before killing her."²⁹

Despite adhering to militant Islamist ideology, working with his Al-Qaeda-linked cell fellows and personally involved in high profile Islamist terrorist attacks, he maintained a regular routine life. He got married after completing his education and had a daughter;

moreover, he owned a restaurant The Cactus at a posh locality, Sindhi Muslim Housing Society in Karachi.³⁰

Conclusion

"He was a very hardworking child and passed with good grades. It is troubling to know that terrorist thoughts and ideologies have also managed to affect youngsters with good education and decent parentage."³¹

These were the words of a teacher of Saad, a key member of the cell. Like Saad, others belonged to urban upper class with sound professional education. Once again, it forces policy makers to revisit the assumptions made on terrorism and education.

To recall, in the past too, it was AQ that had links with terrorists having higher degrees. Examples include "Doctors Cell" of Dr Akmal Waheed and Dr Arshad Waheed in Karachi, "Ata-ur-Rehman-led Jundullah" in Karachi, and "Hammad Adil Cell" of Islamabad. Tahir Saeen cell seems like another such cell.

²⁷ "Saad Aziz confesses of murdering policeman," *Express Tribune*, June 17, 2015.

²⁸ "Director T2F Sabeen Mehmud shot dead in Karachi," *Dawn*, April 25, 2015.

²⁹ "Saad Aziz confesses to Sabeen's murder for holding Valentine's Day rally," *Express Tribune*, May 22, 2015.

³⁰ Sidrah Roghay, "The many shades of Saad Aziz," *The Friday Times*, June 5, 2015.

³¹ *Ibid.*

This should force researchers and policymakers to study and analyse the changing nature of Islamist militants in urban centres like Karachi, Islamabad and Hyderabad. What appears is that A-Qaeda, which started off from a highly centralized structure, is turning more and more decentralized, resulting into its sleeper cells.

In the near future, such cell-like structure may become headache for law enforcement investigators in near future.

That the Tahir Saeen Cell, which has been working in Karachi and Hyderabad for at least two years, was finally busted by the local police makes a strong case for better intelligence-led proactive policing. Other terrorism-ravaged countries like Germany, France, Italy and United Kingdom, largely rely on their police forces.

Urban terrorism can be tackled by providing high-quality surveillance equipment to police force rather than by relying on other non-investigative security bodies.

Silk route monitor

A review of developments on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

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During Chinese President's visit to Pakistan in April this year, both countries signed several agreements including those linked to China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). CPEC is one component, albeit a major one, of an investment understanding between the two countries, worth of \$45 billion. According to preliminary understanding, Chinese banks and companies will provide soft loans and grants to Pakistan to develop its infrastructures and undertake energy and communication projects, along the corridor's track.¹ It is proposed that around a dozen industrial zones will be set up from Khunjerab in the north to Gwadar in the south. The government anticipates creation of economic opportunities in the next four to five years, besides alleviating Pakistan's energy woes.

Political and strategic analysts are describing CPEC as a game changer for Pakistan and wider region in many ways. First, the corridor will significantly contribute towards Pakistan's social and economic development. Besides establishing huge road and rail infrastructure, the CPEC projects will also address Pakistan's lingering power crisis.

Secondly, it will open up trade routes for China and Pakistan to Middle East and Central Asia. Thirdly, the corridor could also improve prospects for regional economic interdependence as well as for peace and stability.

For Pakistan, two key imperatives or compulsions of the emerging regional dynamics in that context are to work for establishing friendly relations with its neighbours and achieving security and stability in the country and wider region.

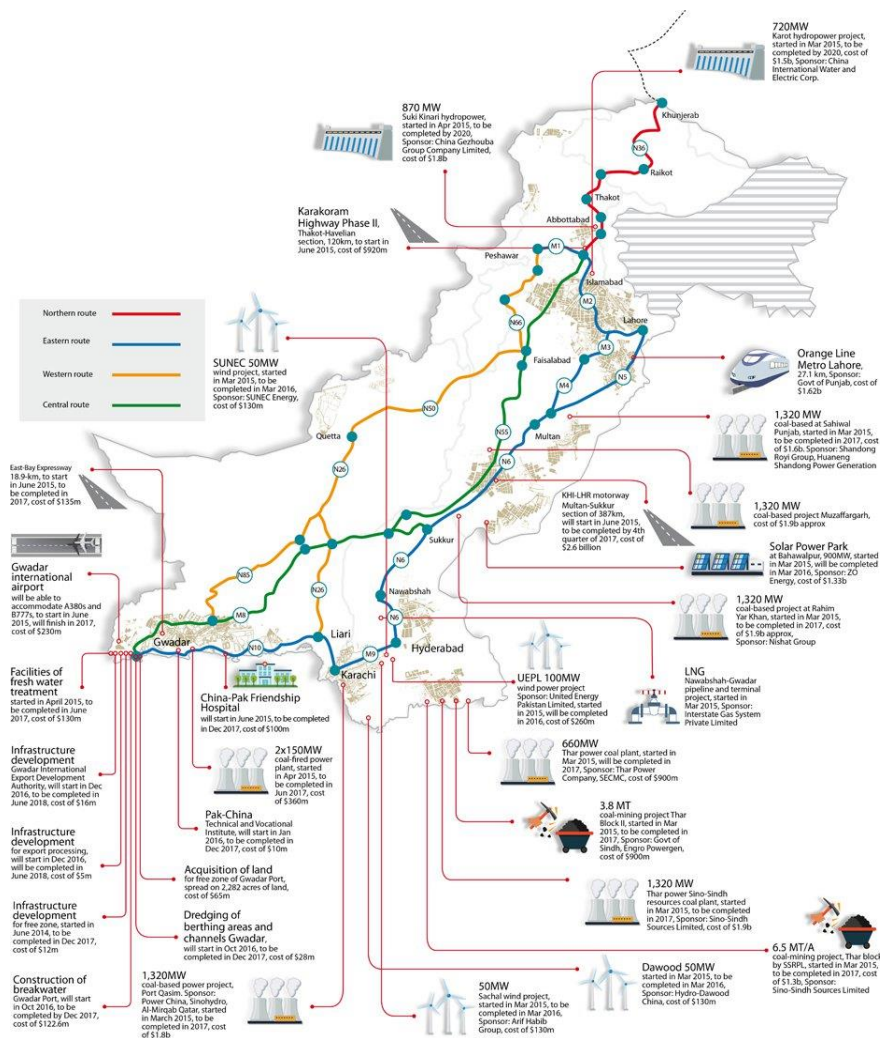
Pakistan's refusal to send its troops to Yemen, which would have annoyed a neighbour Iran, and efforts to contribute towards political reconciliation in Afghanistan can be seen as major steps towards achieving fulfilling the first imperative. With regard to the second imperative, the country has been actively engaged in countering terrorism, particularly since July last year when the military operation Zarb-e-Azb was launched. The action gained an impetus after the December 2014 terrorist attack on an army-run school in Peshawar. Pakistan has taken some CPEC-

¹*Dawn*, Islamabad, May 1, 2015.

specific measures as well, which will be described later.

This report reviews recent CPEC-linked developments, mainly on political, security, socio-cultural and developmental fronts. Apart from discussing key challenges, the report

Figure 1: A sketch of CPEC projects (Source: *Express Tribune*, May 27, 2015)



1. Political response towards CPEC

Even before the visit of Chinese President to Pakistan in April and both countries' signing of agreements related to China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, the project had generated controversy in Pakistan, with political leaders particularly of smaller provinces alleging that the original route of the corridor has been altered to benefit Punjab. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), which currently rules at the centre and in Punjab, was strongly criticized, particularly by political leaders and parties of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Some of the general allegations put on the PML-N government and also perceptions about the CPEC were as under:

- Manifesting a secretive approach, the government does not seem willing to share its plans and policies on the CPEC with governments and political leaderships of other provinces except Punjab. As a result, the government has failed to properly communicate with smaller provinces and take them into confidence on the project.
- The government has changed the original (western) route of the corridor, which was designed to

pass through many parts of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, apparently with a view to benefit Punjab.

- As the new route is largely aligned in Punjab, the CPEC-linked industrial zones will also be established in Punjab discriminating other provinces.
- Federal government only invited Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif, younger brother of prime minister, in the meetings and visits related to CPEC, and ignored other chief ministers.
- As security is also a responsibility of provinces, federal government did not discuss with provinces about how to ensure security of the CPEC projects and Chinese and local workers.

It was against this backdrop that the federal government tried to reach out to political parties in and outside parliament to address their concerns and evolve a consensus on the CPEC project. Apart from holding individual consultations with representatives of political parties and issuing repeated statements, the government also held two all-party conferences (APCs). During the second APC held on May 28, all

political parties gave a go-ahead to the CPEC project. While it was decided in the first APC to establish a parliamentary committee to oversee the progress on CPEC projects, it was decided in the second that western route that passes through main areas of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces will be constructed first.

On repeated requests by political parties to explain the planned routes of the CPEC, Federal Minister for Planning, National Reforms and Development Ahsan Iqbal described the three routes as following:¹

- “The western route originating from Gwadar will pass through Turbat, Panjgur, Nag, Basima, Sorab, Kalat, Quetta, Qilla Saifullah and Zhob and reach Dera Ismail Khan before leading to Islamabad.”
- “The second (central) route will originate from Gwadar and reach Dera Ismail Khan via Basima, Khuzdar, Sukkur, Rajanpur, Layyah, Muzaffargarh and Bhakkar.”

- “The third (eastern) route will include Gwadar, Basima, Khuzdar, Sukkur, Rahimyar Khan, Bahawalpur, Multan and Lahore/Faisalabad and then reach Islamabad.”

According to details revealed on Planning Commission’s website, all provincial capitals are included in the CPEC as nodes. These nodes, which are the key cornerstones on which the corridor will be constructed, are at Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, Sukkur, Karachi, Gwadar and Quetta.²

As mentioned earlier, almost all parties expressed their satisfaction on government’s stance on the CPEC in the May 28 all-party conference. It was indeed a big achievement. One can only hope that that political consensus is not short-lived. There are however certain factors that will influence and determine political response of parties and provinces towards the CPEC in future. These factors are described below:

- i. Implementation of the projects on the three CPEC routes will

¹ “Ahsan reveals three routes of corridor,” *Dawn*, Islamabad, May 15, 2015.

² Shahbaz Rana, “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Lines of

development - not lines of divide,” *Express Tribune*, Islamabad, May 18, 2015.

determine whether or not all provinces are satisfied with the corridor progress. If political parties and leaders from small provinces feel that budgetary allocations and implementation are more oriented towards the eastern route and that other routes are being ignored, they could again start protesting.

- ii. It will also be important to see how the announced parliamentary committee for the CPEC oversight is established and functions. Analysts described the agreement as a positive move and noted that if the proposed committee becomes an active forum, it will certainly help address the concerns of all the provinces and political parties. Nonetheless, some feared that “a non-functional oversight committee will also be detrimental for policy and the execution sustainability of the CPEC project.”³
- iii. Federal government’s relations with provinces, mainly those linked to aspects of internal

security, politics, and political economy or NFC awards,⁴ could also impact the future of political consensus achieved on the CPEC. At the moment, significant political tensions exist between federal government and two main political parties of Sindh, i.e. Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) and Pakistan People’s Party (PPP). Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaaf (PTI) that rules in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the main rival party of the PML-N ruling at centre and in Punjab. Although the provincial government of Balochistan is currently at good terms with the PML-N-led federal government, but the province’s relationship with Islamabad and security establishment has always remained uneasy. A feeling among Balochistan’s government and political parties that Gwadar and CPEC projects are not benefitting their province and Baloch people, could put those parties in opposition to these projects. If that happens, it will also strengthen Baloch

³ Muhammad Amir Rana, “Economic corridor challenges,” *Dawn*, Islamabad, May 17, 2015.

⁴ As per Constitution, NFC awards formulate financial formulas of economic distribution to provincial and federal government for five consecutive years.

insurgents' anti-mega projects stance.

- iv. Political culture in Pakistan has not yet matured, which could create a crisis in the country at any point of time. In recent times, we have seen episodes of political immaturity creating a political turmoil. Political protests and sit-ins organized by the PTI and a religious cleric Tahirul Qadri against the government in Islamabad during last year are one example of that. Also, a culture of political intolerance is growing in Pakistan as it was evident in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's local government elections held on May 30, 2015. The elections entailed a string of incidents of political violence among members and workers of political parties contesting these elections. As many as 12 incidents of political and election-related violence claimed 22 lives and injured 68 others, just in three days.⁵

- v. Finally, civil-military relations will also account for sustained political stability in the country, which is fundamental for the

smooth implementation of CPEC. Pakistani army is extensively engaged in counterterrorism operations and needs civilian support for that. After the announcement of National Action Plan (NAP), military's role in internal security policy has increased. Military is also concerned about what it says 'political problems' hindering the implementation of NAP. Nonetheless, there is a growing perception in Sindh and Balochistan that military is overstepping its constitutional role and interfering in matters of civilian administrations there.

Following pages describe political reactions of different political parties towards the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor expressed in recent months, and how the federal government addressed their concerns and created an environment of political agreement on the CPEC project.

1.1 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa-based political parties vociferously opposed the project's proposed route through

⁵ Statistics are based on Pak Institute for Peace Studies' database on security.

eastern Pakistan, arguing that the original route was meant to pass through the western part of the country, from Balochistan and KP. The Awami National Party (ANP) and the Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) in particular expressed their reservation on what they thought was alteration in the route.

The ANP was on the forefront and even went to the extent of saying that it will protest against a change in the CPEC route like it has been protesting against Kalabagh Dam. The party head said he was ready to be better tagged as a 'traitor' than compromise on the rights of his people. The party believed, at least until its concerns were addressed by the government, that PML-N government wanted to give maximum benefit of CPEC to Punjab. "Punjab is political constituency of PML-N. The party is in minority in other provinces. That is why it wants CPEC to benefit most Punjab," ANP leaders were quoted by media as saying.⁶

Addressing a multi-party conference, against the alteration in the route, in Quetta, ANP's chief Asfandiyar Wali Khan said, "The problem is in Islamabad. When Pashtun and Baloch prosper, is that Pakistan's

prosperity or destruction?"⁷ Later, he argued that the federal government was trying to include Lahore, Punjab's capital, in the CPEC: "Lahore was not part of the original corridor project, but the federal government is making way to include it in the project at the cost of militancy-stricken KP and Balochistan."⁸

Meanwhile, an ANP delegation, led by Mian Iftikhar, had a detailed meeting with political leaders in Balochistan, warning that should the route change, the federal government will bear responsibility for any unrest.⁹

ANP leaders believed that the PPP, leading opposition party, was also toeing the government's line on the project. By changing the route to the eastern side, the dividends will be felt in Sindh, PPP's bastion, they argued.

Similarly, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Fazlur Rehman frequently issued statements against the alleged change in the route and said the government was responsible for making the CPEC controversial.

Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaaf (PTI) of Imran Khan, which rules in Khyber

⁶ BBC Urdu, April 20, 2015, http://www.bbc.com/urdu/pakistan/2015/04/150420_ahsan_china_agreement_sq?ocid=socialflow_facebook.

⁷*Express Tribune*, Islamabad, May 16, 2015.

⁸*Dawn*, May 24, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1183913/inclusion-of-lahore-in-corridor-route-to-be-resisted-asfandiyar>.

⁹*Dawn*, Islamabad, May 1, 2015.

Pakhtunkhwa, also protested against a change in the CPEC route. KP Chief Minister Pervez Khattak said in a press conference on April 22: "We will launch a legal as well as political battle if the federal government changed the original route of the PCEC."¹⁰ He asked the federal government to share details of the agreements and MoUs signed with China. Mr Khattak said KP had huge potential for hydel power generation, but the federal government preferred coal, wind or solar energy in the CPEC's power projects. He complained that projects worth \$11 billion would be set up in Punjab, and KP would get only \$2.7bn projects, while it deserved three times more. He also expressed serious reservations over the presence everywhere of the prime minister's brother and Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif during the visit of the Chinese president.¹¹

A PTI leader Asad Umar noted that the government intended to carry out power generation projects under the CPEC in KP, but the head of the provincial energy board was not invited to any of the many meetings held far that.¹²

PTI chief Imran Khan said while addressing journalists at the inauguration ceremony of a girls' school in Peshawar on May 26 that changes in the route would weaken the federation as less developed regions of the country would be left behind. "Changes in the corridor are likely to stoke hatred of Punjab in other provinces," he argued.¹³ Imran Khan also said on May 15 that Gwadar-China [original] route of the CPEC should be constructed first, as it is the shortest and would help reduce economic burden on big cities.¹⁴

Nationalist elements in KP also resisted the alleged change in the CPEC route. A conference was organized in that regard by Pakhtunkhwa Ulasi Tehreek in Peshawar press club on April 12. Representatives of political parties (mainly ANP, PTI, and QWP) and activists of civil society and trade bodies participated. Participants took serious notice of the federal government's proposed plan to divert the CPEC route and constituted a committee to take up the issue with Senate chairman and Chinese government.¹⁵ The Ulasi Tehreek also organized a seminar in

¹⁰ Zulfiqar Ali, "KP warns of protests if Pak-China corridor route changes," *Dawn*, Islamabad, April 23, 2015.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Khawar Ghumman, "Parliament watch: Is better PR the solution to PML-N's corridor problems?," *Dawn*, May 15, 2015.

¹³ *Express Tribune*, Islamabad, May 27, 2015.

¹⁴ *Express Tribune*, Islamabad, May 15, 2015.

¹⁵ "Any change in Economic Corridor route opposed," *The News*, Islamabad, April 3, 2015.

DI Khan titled “Kashgar-Gwadar Economic Corridor” on April 19. Representatives of different political parties participated and vowed to oppose the CPEC if government did not abandon the plan to change the route of the project.¹⁶

1.2 Balochistan

Balochistan is the least developed province of Pakistan. Many claim that if the CPEC and Gwadar port projects ignore Baloch people and the development of the province, it would be difficult to counter the appeal of Baloch insurgent movements that propagate that federal government wants to capture Balochistan’s resources.

This concern was frequently raised by Balochistan’s Chief Minister Abdul Malik Baloch. “Whether it is Gwadar port or CPEC roads, it is essential that the people of Balochistan first benefit from these projects. If that does not happen, people of Balochistan will not support Gwadar and CPEC-related development projects,” he said in an interview with BBC Urdu.¹⁷

Balochistan CM also said on May 3 that he was not taken into confidence by anyone with regards to CPEC and he was not aware of the CPEC route(s).¹⁸ He reiterated his stance while addressing a press conference in Lahore on May 17: “The CPEC is not just a route... it has multiple aspects. It includes the Gwadar port, roads, railway tracks, energy projects and industrialization (along the corridor) and it should be ensured that Baloch people benefit from it.”¹⁹

On April 21, lawmakers in the Balochistan Assembly denounced ‘modifications in the Gwadar-Kashgar route’ and threatened to hold indefinite protest sit-in in Islamabad if federal government’s ‘biased policy’ continued to ignore Balochistan in the CPEC project.²⁰ The original route, they claimed, passed through major parts of Balochistan including Khuzdar, Quetta and Zhob. Lawmakers however noted that the CPEC is a positive development but “presence of Punjab CM in functions gave an impression that agreements were being signed between Lahore and Beijing and not federation of Pakistan and China.” They said that Balochistan government was not

¹⁶ *The News*, Islamabad, April 20, 2015.

¹⁷ BBC Urdu, April 20, 2015, http://www.bbc.com/urdu/pakistan/2015/04/150420_ahsan_china_agreement_sq?ocid=socialflow_facebook.

¹⁸ Syed Ali Shah, “Balochistan CM says not taken into confidence on Pak-China corridor,” *Dawn*, Islamabad, May 4, 2015.

¹⁹ Meeran Khan, “Reconciliation plan sent to Centre: Dr Malik,” *The News*, Islamabad, May 18, 2015.

²⁰ Amanullah Kasi, “MPAs criticize change in economic corridor route,” *Dawn*, Islamabad, April 22, 2015.

consulted although the main agreements that were signed during Chinese president's visit were linked to Gwadar seaport.²¹ Balochistan Assembly had also adopted a unanimous resolution on February 28 against perceived modification of the CPEC route.

Like in KP, the Balochistan chapter of ANP also repeatedly opposed any change in the original design of the CPEC route and warned that the development plan would become controversial if ANP's demand was ignored. The ANP made the demand in a resolution passed at a public meeting held at the hockey ground in Quetta on April 28.²²

A multi-party conference was held in Quetta on April 29 at the office of JUI-N (Nazriati faction of JUI) that announced to hold protests across Balochistan on May 5 and shutter-down strike on May 6 to oppose the proposed change in the CPEC route. The APC constituted a 12-member committee to meet Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Chinese ambassador to resolve the issues with dialogue. JUI-F, ANP, Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) Balochistan, PPP, and representatives of traders association participated.²³ Later, a shutter-down

strike was observed in parts of Quetta on May 6 to protest the alleged change in route of the CPEC.²⁴

Another non-government multi-party conference was held on CPEC in Quetta on May 16. The conference welcomed the corridor as a game changer for the region but opposed any change in its original route that passes through northern parts of Balochistan and southern districts of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. Politicians from PPP, PTI, PML-Q, JUI-F, JUI-S (Sami-ul Haq faction), Jamaat-e-Islami, Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, National Party, Balochistan National Party and Hazara Democratic Party attended the conference convened by the ANP. The ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, however, stayed away from the conference.²⁵ Participants noted that only \$2 billion have been provided to Balochistan in the \$45 billion Pak-China agreements.

Balochistan's nationalist leaders also have concerns about the demographic change that the mega projects like Gwadar and CPEC could bring in the province. They have been raising their voice against non-Baloch settlements in Gwadar. Baloch insurgents also frequently

²¹ Ibid.

²² Amanullah Kasi, "ANP opposes change in route of corridor," *Dawn*, Islamabad, April 29, 2015.

²³ *Express Tribune*, Islamabad, April 30, 2015.

²⁴ *Express Tribune*, Islamabad, May 7, 2015.

²⁵ Muhammad Zafar, "APC opposes detours in economic corridor route," *Express Tribune*, Islamabad, May 17, 2015.

attack non-Baloch workers and settlers in the province. A prominent leader of ruling National Party (NP) Hasil Bizenjo was reported by media to have said in the May 28 APC chaired by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif that with more investment coming into Balochistan under the CPEC, more non-Baloch will come to Balochistan in search of jobs, squeezing the Baloch population further.²⁶

Hasil Bizenjo also presided over a two-day meeting of NP's Central Committee in Quetta on May 25-26, which was attended by Chief Minister Dr Abdul Malik Baloch, senators, MNAs, MPAs and members of the party from the four provinces. Participants sought a 50 percent share for Balochistan in the Gwadar Port Authority and announced that a committee would be formed to draft legislation for claiming revenue to be generated from the CPEC in the province.²⁷

1.3 Sindh

Main political parties of Sindh including PPP and MQM although welcomed the CPEC projects but also raised voice in support of KP and Balochistan's concerns about the corridor. Apparently, the alleged change in the CPEC route did not

affect Sindh. Karachi and parts of interior Sindh remain parts of different CPEC projects.

The PPP participated in almost all meetings and multi-party conferences held by political parties on the CPEC. At the same, its leaders mainly the party chief and former president Asif Ali Zardari tried to convince political leaders that they should not make the CPEC controversial. Also, the party asked the government to address genuine concerns of political parties.

Mr Zardari hosted leaders of political parties at a dinner in Islamabad on April 23 reportedly to create a broad-based political ownership of the CPEC. The government representatives, present in the meeting, assured that the prime minister will take all parties and provinces into confidence on the CPEC project.²⁸

Later on April 26, Zardari said in Karachi while addressing a large party rally that the PPP would not allow the Chinese investment coming under the CPEC projects to become a victim of political point-scoring and there would be no politics or opposition on the subject of Chinese investment coming to Pakistan. "The incoming investment

²⁶ *Dawn*, May 29, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1184917>.

²⁷ Saleem Shahid, "China-Pakistan corridor: NP criticizes centre for not

taking Balochistan govt on board," *Dawn*, May 27, 2015.

²⁸ Asim Yasin, "Zardari paving way for Pak-China corridor," *The News*, Islamabad, April 24, 2015.

will secure future of coming generations of Pakistan,” he argued.²⁹ He, however, held out the assurance that all the fears and reservations of the Pashtun and Baloch communities on the CPEC would be addressed in accordance with the Constitution.

1.4 Gilgit Baltistan

It is at Gilgit Baltistan that Pakistan connects with China. GB and its capital Gilgit, therefore, will be the gateway of the corridor. When it comes to Gilgit Baltistan, below are two key corridor-related initiatives:

1. The existing Karakorum Highway (KKH) will be expanded, from the border point at China to Islamabad. A portion of the KKH has already been expanded from Khunjerab, GB, to Thakot, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. About 500 km of this expanded highway falls under GB, from Khunjerab to Kohistan.
2. A 700-km long railway track will be laid from Kashgar, China’s bordering city, to Islamabad, Pakistan’s capital. Again, this track will go through GB.

Political and community leaders and people of Gilgit Baltistan (GB) welcome the idea of CPEC in their area, but complain that their concerns and interests have not been taken into account. They desire of more direct participation in steering the project. In their conversation with one of the authors, Peer Muhammad, local stakeholders reminded that despite the project’s direct significance for the GB, the federal government didn’t take the area’s people and their representatives into confidence. The region’s top political representative is the Chief Minister of Gilgit Baltistan. Yet, several noted, unlike Punjab’s or Balochistan’s CM, Gilgit Baltistan’s CM was never invited to the internal meeting on the project nor was he taken to China for discussing and signing of the MoUs in the past two years. One noted that many came to know about the project only after the Chinese President’s visit.³⁰

After the visit of Chinese president to Pakistan, an amalgamation of all GB-based political and religious parties, the Awami Action Party (ACC), convened a special All Parties Conference in Hunza Aliabad, on April 26. Participants expressed serious concern that the federal

²⁹ Azeem Samar, “Politics won’t be allowed on Chinese investment: Zardari,” *The News*, Islamabad, April 27, 2015.

³⁰ Peer Muhammad’s interview with Shahid Ashraf Tarrar, chairman NHA, May 29, 2015. (The NHA is the leading executing agency of motorway projects under the CPEC).

government had completely neglected the GB's leadership on the CPEC, to pass through GB. They demanded that the government declare special economic zones in GB under the project, to compensate those affected by it. The conference linked the project with the constitutional rights of GB and said without fulfilling this demand, the project will not be allowed to implement through GB.³¹

Members of GB Council officially wrote to the Minister for Planning and Development Mr. Ahsan Iqbal for a briefing so that they too are on board. However, the minister has so far not answered the demand.

Some see the corridor having impact on the GB's constitutional status, a state of limbo. GB is awarded special status in the Constitution of Pakistan, dissimilar to the ones granted to Pakistan's four provinces. Until recently, the area was known as Federally Administered Northern Areas (FANA). Instead of administering the region through the constitution, as most of the rest of the country is, GB is governed through Gilgit Baltistan Empowerment and

Self-Governance Rule, 2009. The area's politicians therefore wondered if the federal government can use the territory for an international project, at all.

Any major investment involving GB, with an undecided constitutional status, can cost the region economically and politically.³² Already, partly because of this status, the region continues to rank lower in the socio-economic development ladder of the country.

Local stakeholders believe that if Gilgit Baltistan is given proper constitutional status like much of the rest of the country, they could raise their voice in support of their rights at national forums (such as NFC and Council of Common Interests) and therefore could get more benefits from projects such as the CPEC.

Some said if the project fails to engage youth, and rather render them jobless, several of them can be exploited towards radicalization.³³ Some pointed that should the area not be accommodated in the CPEC, the possibility that the areas' youth may rise [against it] cannot be denied. Under such a circumstance, young people can be used in the

³¹Daily *Bang-e-Sahar* (Urdu), Gilgit-Baltistan, http://www.bangesahar.net/popup.php?r_date=04-27-2015&img=04-27-2015page-1-10.

³²Peer Muhammad's interview with Advocate Amjad Hussain, a PPP leader

and former GB Council member, Gilgit, April 2015.

³³Peer Muhammad's interview with political analyst Aziz Ali Dad on telephone.

hands of saboteurs to destabilize the project.³⁴ A few made a reference to how exploitation of resources in Balochistan resulted into a movement there in past. This, they said, can create insecurity too. The local insecurity, however, they said, can be overcome by satisfying the locals about their share in the project.³⁵

The authors observed that the dominant economic concern in GB was that once the corridor project is completed, with rail track and motorways laid down, the existing economic trade activities of GB's people with China's will halt.

As cargo trains will depart from China to the proposed dry port in Havalian directly, located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the existing Sost Dry Port will turn useless.

As of now, annual trade with China via Khunjerab stands at PKR 1.5 billion, with 700 to 800 containers passing through the border. Over 5000 people from GB are involved, directly or indirectly, with the Chinese trade through the Sost Dry Port. The trade volume was even higher before a natural disaster shook Attabad in 2010. With 4,000

containers transiting annually through the border, the trade volume fell in the range of PKR 2.5 billion to 3 billion. Many, therefore, fear that the vibrancy of Sost Dry Port will further diminish after the completion of the CPEC project.³⁶ Bypassing this dry port means denying livelihoods to the area's 5,000 traders, businessmen, transporters, hoteliers and labourers.³⁷

Former finance minister of GB Legislative Assembly Mirza Hussain argued that if the rapid train service is directly linked from Kashgar (China) to Havalian (KP, Pakistan), the project is a disaster for the existing economic and commercial activities in GB. The future for GB is bleak, Hussain, who is also a leading trader, argued. GB, he said, will be used to tread rails and trucks, the goods of which will be uploaded in China and reach to Havalian, bypassing GB.³⁸

Although the Karakorum Highway has been expanded, as discussed above, the highway will draw less attraction in the presence of the fast train service. Traders will prefer the train service due to less transportation costs. The train, on which goods will be loaded in

³⁴ Peer Muhammad's interview with former Finance Minister GB Legislative Assembly Mirza Hussain, Nager, April 2015.

³⁵ Peer Muhammad's interview with Inayatullah Shumali, Caretaker Information Minister of GB, Chillas.

³⁶ Peer Muhammad's interview with Javed Hussain, president of GB Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Gilgit, May 2015.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Peer Muhammad's interview with Mirza Hussain.

China's Xinjiang province, will snake through mountains and tunnels, leaving nothing for the GB territory.

GB leaders and people are also concerned that the government has not planned to establish any trade or industrial zone in the GB. Only then will the CPEC shower benefits upon GB, as other parts of the country. Some said that the corridor terminal be established in Gilgit.

Locals fear that the construction of motorways and railway tracks in the area will decrease landholding of the people, who would be forced to settle elsewhere. A conference, attended by political leaders and community representatives of Hunza, Nager and Gujal on April 26, as cited earlier, demanded the federal government to immediately announce a special package under the CPEC demand that the government declare special economic zones in GB under the project, to compensate those affected by it.³⁹

1.5 Government efforts to achieve political consensus

- Leaders of the ruling PML-N including ministers and prime

minister frequently issued statements to dispel the impression that the route of CPEC is being changed. Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal told BBC Urdu in April that the CPEC alignment passing through Balochistan and KP will be completed first. The minister also provided details about the three planned routes of the CPEC including eastern, western and central.⁴⁰

- Ahsan Iqbal again told the National Assembly on April 29 in a policy statement that there was no plan to change the CPEC route and all three routes were being constructed simultaneously.⁴¹ Later, on May 11, Ahsan stated: "I assure you that I will quit and not defend [the decision] if someone could prove that the route, as agreed on July 5, 2013 [during the PM's visit to China], has been changed."⁴²
- Government frequently assured leaders of political parties that

³⁹Daily *Bang-e-Sahar* (Urdu), Gilgit-Baltistan, http://www.bangesahar.net/popup.php?r_date=04-27-2015&img=04-27-2015page-1-10.

⁴⁰ BBC Urdu April 20, 2015, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/urdu/pakistan/>

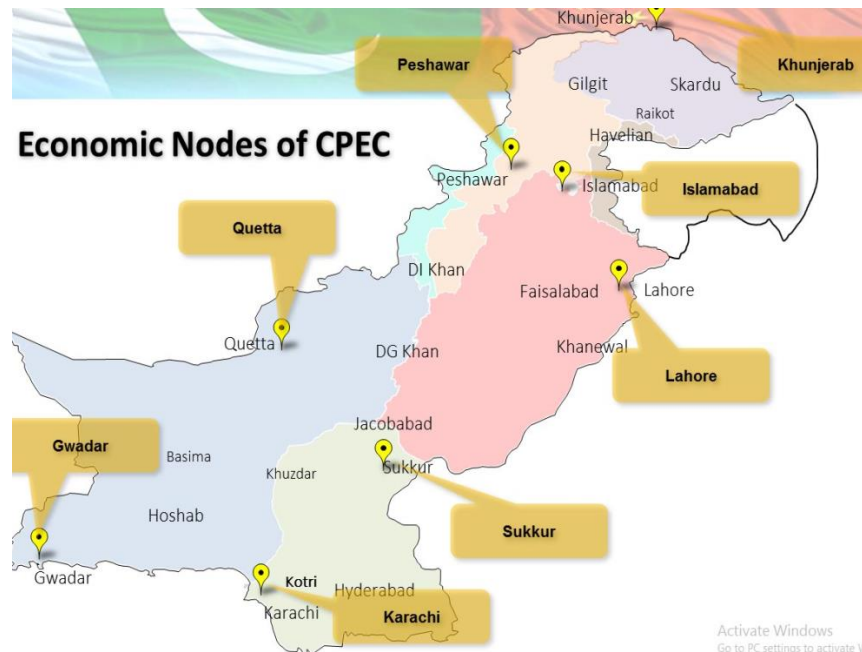
2015/04/150420_ahsan_china_agreement_sq?ocid=socialflow_facebook.

⁴¹ Azam Khan, "Economic corridor: In policy statement, govt denies change in route," *Express Tribune*, April 30, 2015.

⁴² Qamar Zaman, "Economic passageway: Senators seek briefing on trade route by PM," *Express Tribune*, May 12, 2015,

the CPEC takes less developed areas into the folds of active development (particularly Gilgit-Baltistan, Thar and Gwadar regions). The CPEC would benefit all provinces and bring peace, harmony, cooperation and economic development in the entire country.

- The government provided a detailed map of the CPEC showing the provincial capitals (Quetta, Peshawar, Karachi and Lahore) among the major nodes of the project. The map is given below:



Source: <http://www.pc.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/cpecs.jpg>

- Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif chaired an all-party conference (APC) on CPEC at the PM House Islamabad on May 13. One of the key outcomes of the conference was an agreement among parties to set up a special bicameral

parliamentary committee for regular oversight of the CPEC project.¹

- Responding to small provinces' concerns about establishment of industrial zones in Punjab, Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal wrote in his special column in a leading Urdu newspaper *Jangon* May 21: "Baloch and Pashtun people are being misguided [on CPEC] by telling them that industrial zones are to be established in Punjab only. In fact, establishment of only one industrial zone has been decided so far under the CPEC project and that will be in Gwadar. The establishment of more industrial zones in the future will be decided by the China-Pakistan Joint Working Group, which will be formed in the next two months. I had assured leaders of all political parties in a meeting that all provinces will be consulted for the establishment of industrial zones."²
- Another APC was held at the Prime Minister's Office on May 28 that gave a go ahead to the

CPEC project. The meeting decided to first build the western alignment of the route, which runs from Gwadar to D.I. Khan before entering Punjab, which in large helped in subsiding the political opposition. It was decided that the remaining concerns of parties will be addressed by a bicameral parliamentary committee which the government had already agreed to constitute for a regular oversight of the project. The government also agreed to set up joint working groups having representation of all provinces to give their views and suggestions on economic and industrial hubs to be built along the corridor.³

- Before the May 28 conference, government put extra efforts and gave separate briefings to senior political leaders at their doorsteps. In this regard, meetings were held with the leaders of Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP), PTI, Qaumi Wattan Party-Sherpao, JUI-F and ANP. The consultation process completed

¹Khawar Ghumman, "Special committee to oversee CPEC project," *Dawn*, Islamabad, May 14, 2015.

² *Daily Jang* (Urdu), Rawalpindi, May 21, 2015.

³ Khawar Ghumman, "Parties give go-ahead to China-Pak corridor," *Dawn*, May 29, 2015.

just minutes before the APC.⁴

2. Security dimension

This section discusses the security situation in the country in recent months, particularly since start of the year 2015, as well as government's efforts to achieve peace and maintain law and order in different parts of Pakistan, including conflict zones. It also describes CPEC-specific security measures taken by the government.

2.1 Security situation of Pakistan in 2015⁵

There has been relative improvement in the country's security situation since start of this year. The number of terrorist attacks has gradually declined over the months. One of the key factors for that were the extensive security operations conducted against militants in North Waziristan and Khyber agencies of FATA as well as other parts of the country. Also, since December 2014 attack on a school in Peshawar, which had killed over 100 children, federal and provincial governments have been more vigilant and have increased surveillance against the

militants. Thirdly, government evolved and announced a National Action Plan (NAP), which, though being implemented partly, has put pressure on extremist and militant groups in the country.

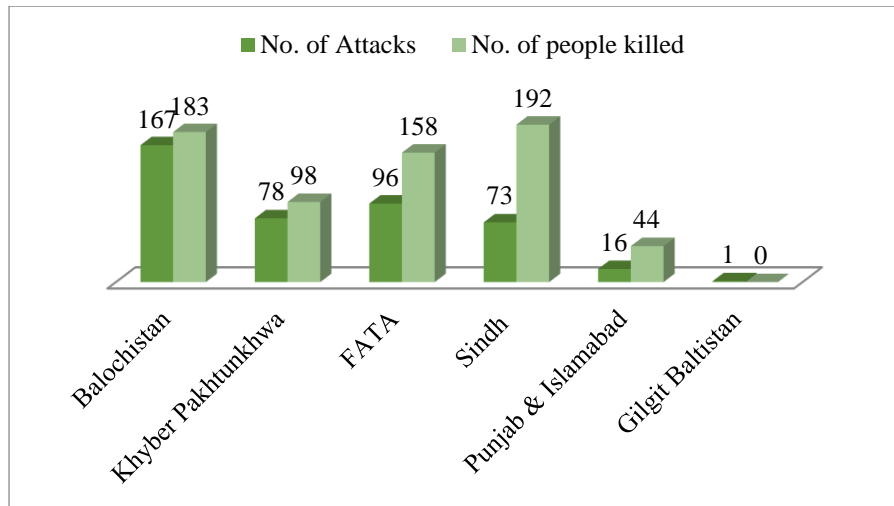
Military operations in North Waziristan and Khyber agencies have significantly damaged militant's networks and infrastructure. But threat of militancy is still there, although with a lesser intensity. Militants have been successful in carrying out some major attacks this year including a suicide blast in an *imambargah* in Shikarpur (Sindh) in January; suicide attacks on Shia worshippers in Peshawar in February; suicide attacks on churches in Lahore in March; targeted killing of 20 non-Baloch workers in Kech (Balochistan) in April; lethal attacks on Ismaili community in Karachi and Pashtun community in Balochistan in May; and suicide bombings that killed Punjab Home Minister and 18 others in Attock, Punjab in August.

On the whole, 431 terrorist attacks took place across Pakistan between January and July this year, which claimed 675 lives and injured 855 others. Regional distribution of these attacks is given at Chart 1.

Chart 1: Terrorist attacks and fatalities in Pakistan (1 Jan. to 31 July 2015)

⁴ Qamar Zaman, "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Backdoor meetings helped forge consensus," *Express Tribune*, May 29, 2015.

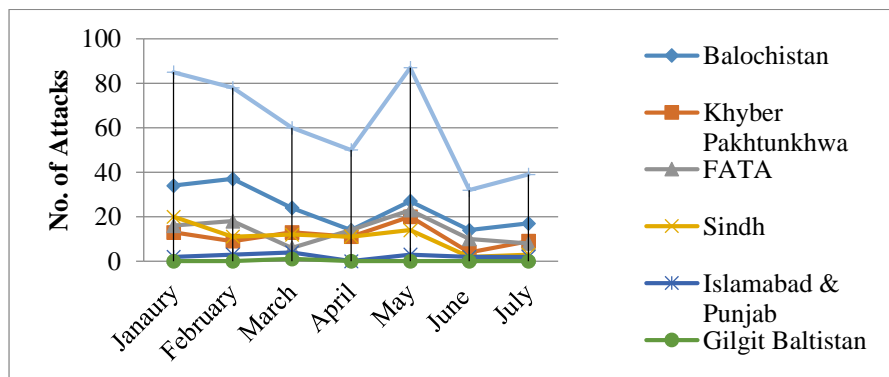
⁵ All statistics used in this section are based on Pak Institute for Peace Studies' (PIPS) database on conflict and security, unless otherwise described.



There had been a declining trend in terrorist attacks in Pakistan from January to April, but in May the number of terrorist attacks rose once again. In May, the number of attacks increased in all regions of Pakistan.

Trends of terrorist attacks in different regions of Pakistan since January this year are given at Chart 2.

Chart 2: Trend of terrorist attacks in Pakistan since January 2015



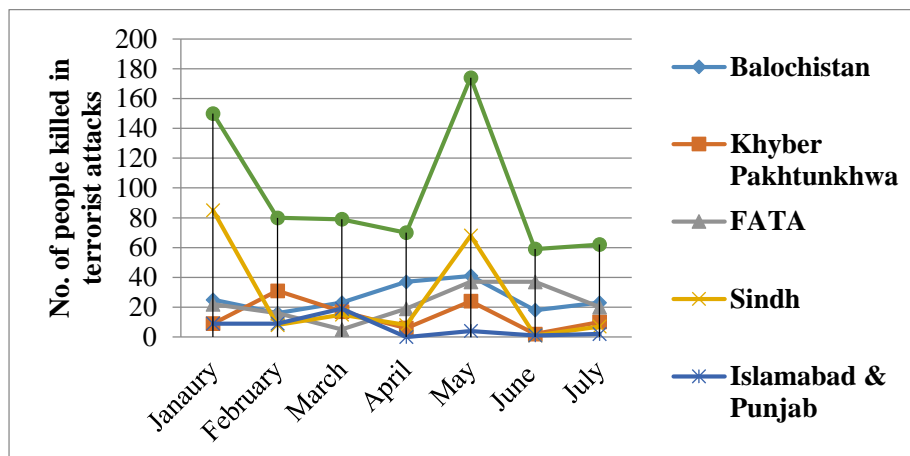
As for terrorist attacks, the number of people killed in these attacks also fell

from January to April, but the number rose in May, followed by a

significant decline in subsequent months Balochistan, FATA and Karachi figure high in terrorism-

related fatalities since January this year. (See Chart 3)

Chart 3: Trend of fatalities in terrorist attacks in Pakistan since January 2015



2.1.1 Balochistan

Balochistan's security remains volatile where many militant, sectarian and insurgent groups are active. Highest number of terrorist attacks for any one region of the country in 2015 was reported from Balochistan. (See Chart 1) If property security measures are not taken, the implementation of CPEC projects could be relatively more affected in Balochistan as compared to other regions. The province has a history of attacks on state installations, development projects, and non-Baloch workers and settlers. Many incidents of kidnapping of foreigners including Chinese and government

officials have also been reported from the province in past.

Baloch insurgent groups see mega projects in Balochistan including Gwadar and the CPEC as a conspiracy to capture Balochistan's resources. That implies there is risk of attacks on the CPEC project sites and workers. An insurgent commander Harbiyar Marri, chief of the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) said in a recent interview with a local newspaper: "Pakistani security forces have increased operations in Makran and Gwadar regions for paving the way to implement Pak-China agreements... Enforced disappearance of Baloch people in

the name of security operations and presenting Baloch people as insurgents cannot be fool the world... China has expansionist designs and wants to capture resources of Balochistan to extend its outreach to Middle East. Pakistan is supporting China by killing the Baloch people in the name of providing security for [CPEC] projects.”¹

In recent months, Baloch insurgents have increased attacks on non-Baloch workers as well. In May, 22 Pashtuns were target killed in Mastung reportedly by a Baloch insurgent group United Baloch Army (UBA). In the month of April, too, militants of Baloch Liberation Front (BLF) had shot dead 20 non-Baloch laborers hailing from Punjab and Sindh. Most analysts are convinced that these targeted killing are an effort by Baloch insurgents to give a message that Balochistan is not safe for projects like China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Many also see a foreign hand behind these attacks which want to disrupt China-

Pakistan Economic Corridor. Pakistan has since long blamed India for fueling insurgency in Balochistan by supporting Baloch insurgent groups.

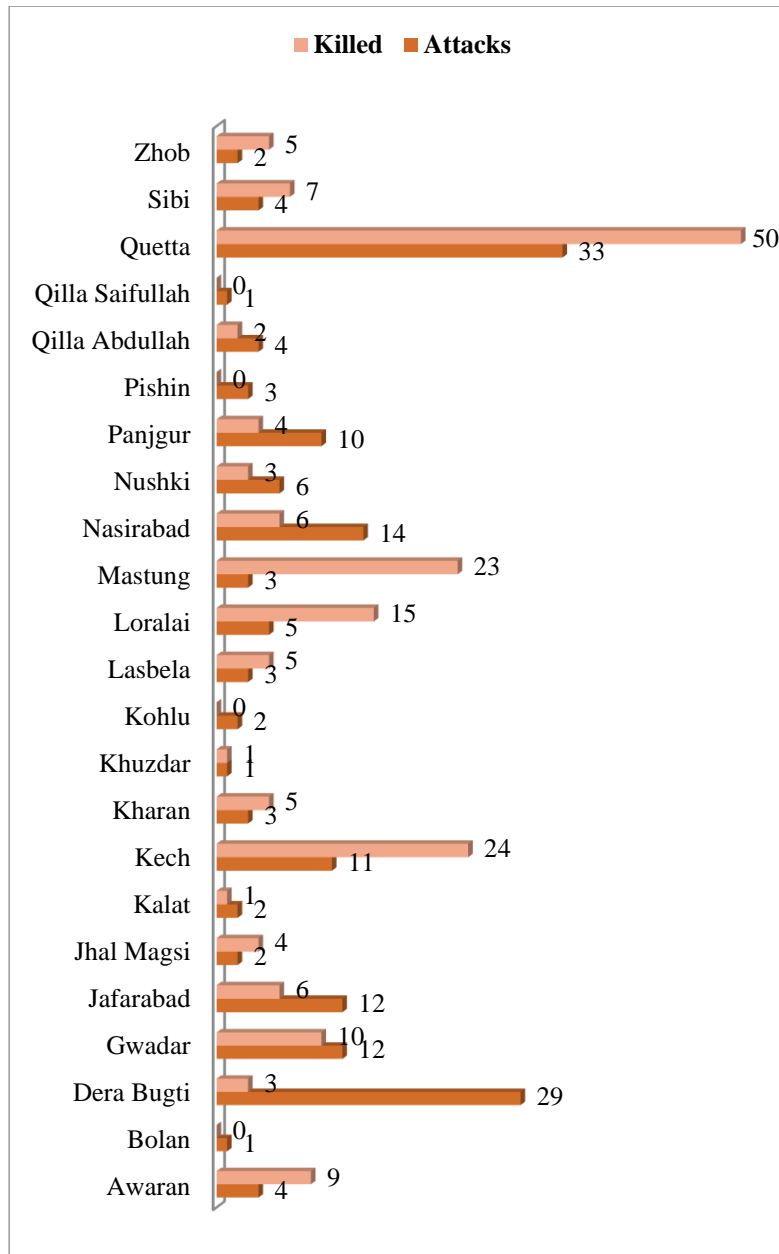
Security forces have also increased their security and search operations in the province in recent months, mainly in areas close to Gwadar and Makran coastal belt. There were also reports that a Karachi-like operation could be launched in Balochistan after the Mastung killings.² However, it would be indeed a great challenge for provincial government, federal government and army to come on one page and evolve a consensus security policy for Balochistan. Historically, Balochistan’s nationalist leaders and also people have seen Islamabad and security establishment with an eye of suspicion and mistrust. Besides military operation, extensive political efforts are also needed to restore peace in the province.

Chart 4: Regional distribution of terrorist attacks in Balochistan (1 Jan. to 31 July 2015)

¹ Daily *Azadi* (Urdu), Quetta, April 16, 2015.

² Abdul Mateen, “Curbing violence: Karachi-style operation planned for

Balochistan,” *Express Tribune*, May 31, 2015.



2.1.3 FATA and KP

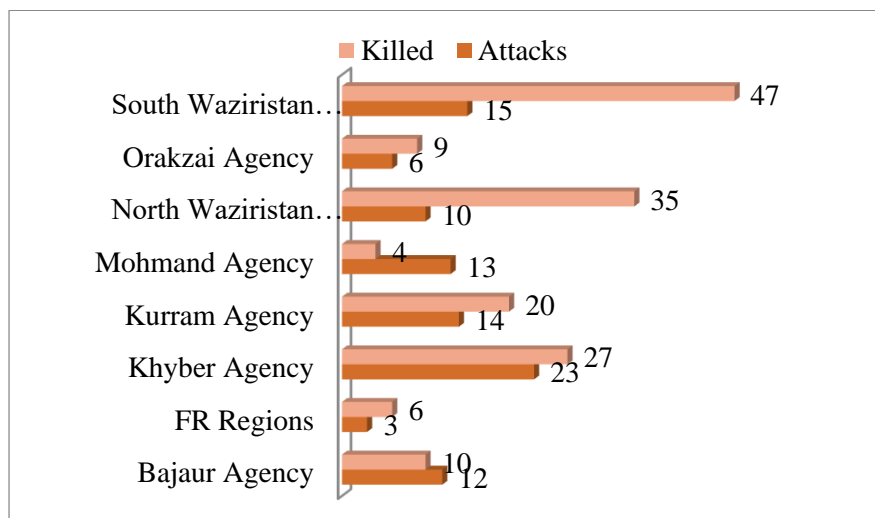
A total of 174 terrorist attacks took place in KP and FATA between January and July this year, which claimed 256 lives. This is a significant decrease in terrorist attacks (53 percent) and fatalities (about 48 percent) when compared to previous year's corresponding months. During the same period of previous year (i.e. January to July 2014), as many as 372 reported terrorist attacks had killed 491 people across KP and FATA.

That suggests that military operations in FATA have weakened militants' capacity to strike in these two regions. But the threat is not completely eliminated. Indeed, militants have been successful in carrying out terrorist attacks in almost all seven agencies of FATA since January this year (*See Chart 5*).

Militants' launch of terrorist attacks in agencies other than North Waziristan and Khyber was apparently intended at distracting security forces from those two agencies where the latter are engaged in military operations against militants. For instance, the militants' activities have increased in South Waziristan in recent months. Armed clashes between militants and the security forces were reported from there in July, which indicates that militants have started to regroup there.

Militants' ability to have cross-agencies movement in FATA, mainly relocations from North Waziristan and Khyber agencies due to military operations there, could pose a threat to security forces and also to peace and security of tribal areas and also parts of KP province which will be traversed by CPEC routes.

Chart 5: Regional distribution of terrorist attacks in FATA (1 Jan. to 31 July 2015)

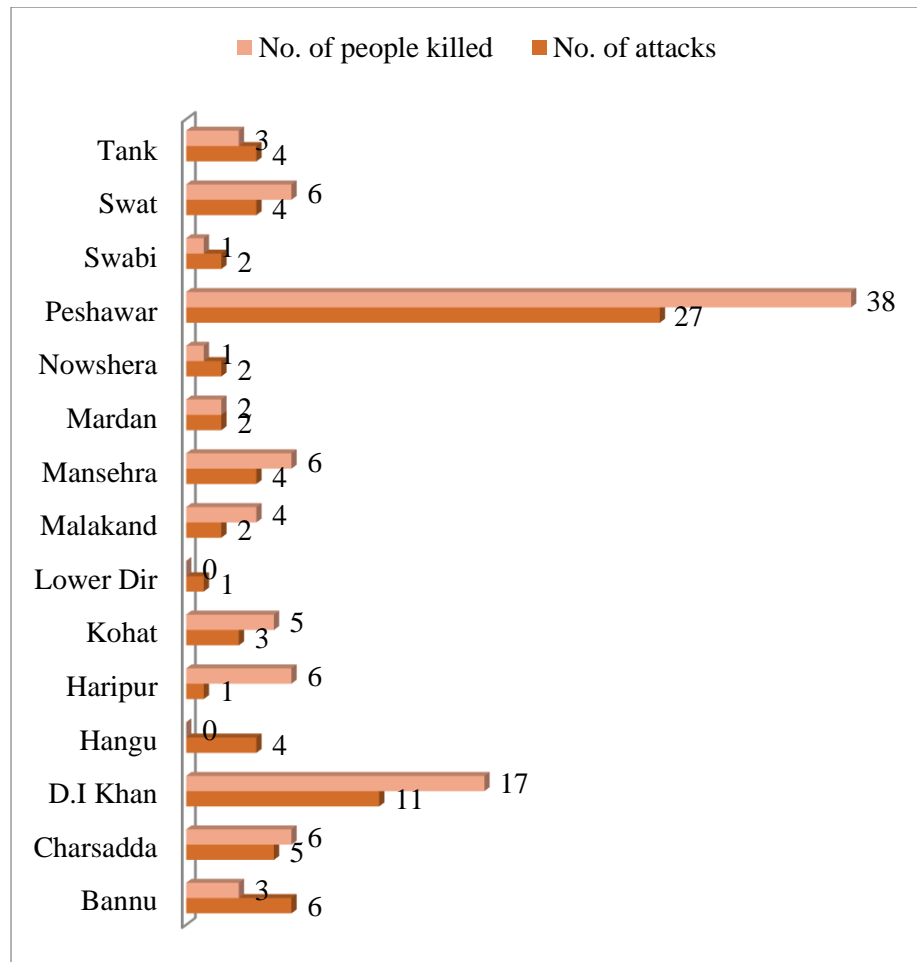


The security situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has also relatively improved but law enforcement agencies need to be more vigilant to prevent any major attack in the future. As the military operations have frustrated the militants they could try to retaliate in form of some major attacks such as they carried out on a school in Peshawar in December last year. Also, militants have shown an increased presence in recent months in the KP districts bordering on North and South Waziristan

agencies such as Bannu, Tank and DI Khan.

Militants carried out 78 terrorist attacks in 15 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (*See Chart 6*) between January and July this year. That implies militants' outreach in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including to areas where CPEC projects will be aligned, is not fully broken; nor is their operational capability completely destroyed.

Chart 6: Regional distribution of terrorist attacks in KP (1 Jan. to 31 July 2015)

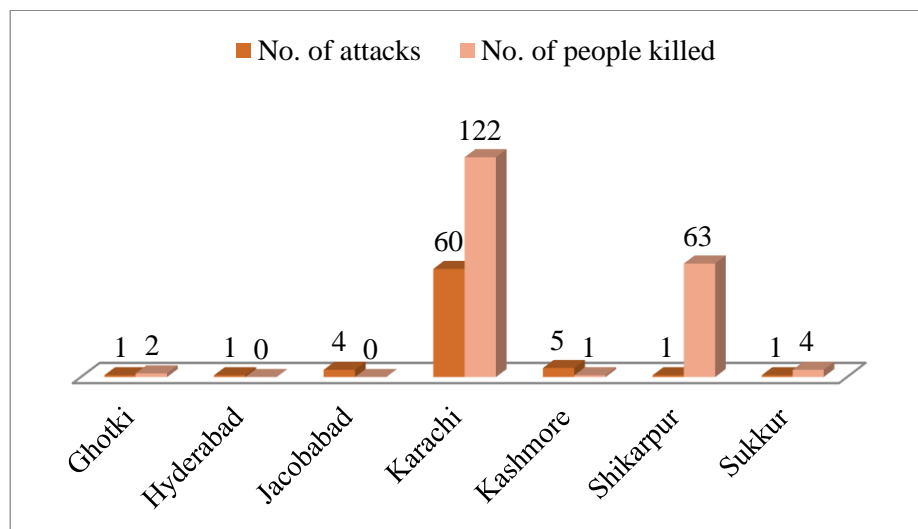


2.1.4 Karachi and Interior Sindh

In terms of terrorism-related fatalities, Sindh, mainly Karachi, was the worst affected region of Pakistan

between January and July (2015). A total of 192 people lost their lives and another 137 were injured in Sindh over the mentioned period of time. Most of these casualties concentrated in two cities of Sindh, i.e. Karachi and Shikarpur. (See Chart 7)

Chart 7: Regional distribution of terrorist attacks in Sindh (1 Jan. to 31 July 2015)



Yet, Karachi has been relatively peaceful in 2015, particularly in recent weeks and months, compared to previous years. Apparently, surgical operations against militants and criminal elements have significantly weakened the infrastructure of terrorists and criminal gangs in Karachi. According to a recent report compiled by the Sindh police and submitted to the provincial home department, “the murders and targeted killings in Karachi are all-time lowest.” The report said that the analysis of first six months of 2015 “shows that average murders reported in 2015 are

2.7 per day as compared to 5.7 murders per day in 2014 and 8.9 murders per day in 2013 [for the same period]”.¹

Yet, militants have at times managed to show their presence by carrying out either high-profile targeted killings or terrorist attacks like the one on Ismaili community in May this year. A long existing nexus among Sunni sectarian and other local and international terrorist organizations in Karachi is a huge challenge for security agencies.

¹ Hasan Mansoor, “971 killed in first six months of 2015 in Karachi,” *Dawn*, July 22, 2015.

Meanwhile, interior Sindh is apparently next target of militant and sectarian outfits, which have been strengthening their positions there since long. A lethal suicide blast in Shikarpur in January this year targeted an *imambargah* and killed 63 people. Sectarian tensions and militant violence are not new in this part of Sindh (Shikarpur, Sukkur and Khairpur).

Although most of the recent major terrorist attacks in Sindh have been sectarian-oriented, however in past, sectarian militant organizations, as well as Taliban militants, have carried out major attacks against state interests and security agencies in the province. Sectarian organizations' nexus with Taliban and Al-Qaeda makes them dangerous for the projects like CPEC.

On the whole, although militants and sectarian groups have been weakened in the province including in interior Sindh, they still have the capacity to attack the CPEC project sites; they can also kidnap workers engaged at those sites.

2.1.5 Punjab and Islamabad

Punjab is apparently the safest region of Pakistan in terms of incidence of terrorist attacks. But the province, mainly its capital Lahore, has faced at

least 30 major attacks since 2004 including attacks on Sri Lankan cricket team in 2009, attacks on Ahmadi worship places in 2010, and an attack on Wagah border last year.² That means terrorists have support bases in parts of Punjab from where they can operate to hit their targets.

After the announcement of NAP, Punjab government has enhanced surveillance and police has conducted dozens of search operations in different parts of the province. Hundreds of militants and their supporters have also been arrested. Supporters of militants are apparently under immense pressure.

In July, Malik Ishaq, the main leader and chief of the core/main group of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) was killed along with his two sons and others in Muzaffargarh, in south Punjab, in an alleged police encounter.³ The assassination was described by many as a severe blow to the LeJ. Also it indicated that the government Punjab, which has since long been criticized for its alleged inaction against sectarian groups, is becoming serious in eliminating the militant groups operating in the province.

In the following month, Punjab Home Minister Shuja Khanzada was killed along with 18 others in a suicide blast in his home town in district Attock. Reportedly militants

²Sabir Shah, "30 major terror attacks in Lahore since 2004," *The News*, February 18, 2015.

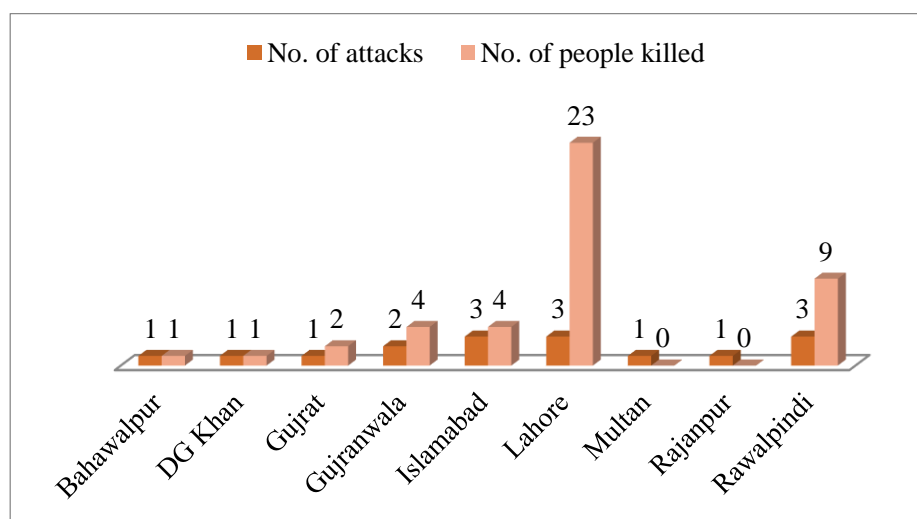
³*Dawn*, July 29, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1197098>.

of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi was involved in the attack; a TTP splinter group Jamaatul Ahrar had claimed the responsibility for the attack.

Although the province has witnessed fewer – as compared to previous year’s corresponding months – and mostly low scale attacks this year, but the militants and their supporters in

the province might be keeping low profile and have not been eliminated. That implies the threat of major attacks including on CPEC project sites and workers still exists. For that, the provincial government needs to enhance its implementation of NAP. There is also need for enhanced coordination among civilian and military intelligence agencies.

Chart 8: Terrorist attacks in Punjab & Islamabad (1 Jan. to 31 July 2015)



2.1.6 Gilgit Baltistan

Only one terrorist attack was reported from the region during 2015, which did not cause any fatality. However, the region has seen plenty of sectarian violence in past. Some high intensity attacks in recent years on security forces and foreigners also revealed TTP and other militants’ outreach to northern

areas. However an almost absence of militants’ bases and support structures in Gilgit and Baltistan suggests the threat level to the CPEC in this region will be low. However sporadic attacks on the CPEC-linked sites and personnel cannot be ruled out. Some terrorist attacks from the region in recent years, which hit high value targets such as 2013 attack on tourists at Nangaparbat base,

attracted the world attention and also raised concerns that the Pakistani militants, mainly the TTP, in collaborations with ETIM and Chinese Uighur militants could try to entrench themselves in this region. Other than that most of the violent incidents reported from this region have been sectarian-related.

2.2 Government's efforts to achieve security

- The National Assembly and the Senate unanimously passed the 21st Constitutional Amendment Bill 2015 in January this year by more than a two-thirds majority, paving the way for the constitution of military courts to conduct the speedy trials of terrorists.
- The government also established National Action Plan in January to crack down on terrorism and to supplement the ongoing anti-terrorist offensive in north-western Pakistan. But the government and independent reports suggest that implementation on the 20 points of NAP has been slow.
- The government itself is not happy with the level of achievement on the front of implementation of NAP. The 20 points of the NAP have a wide scope. The challenges towards

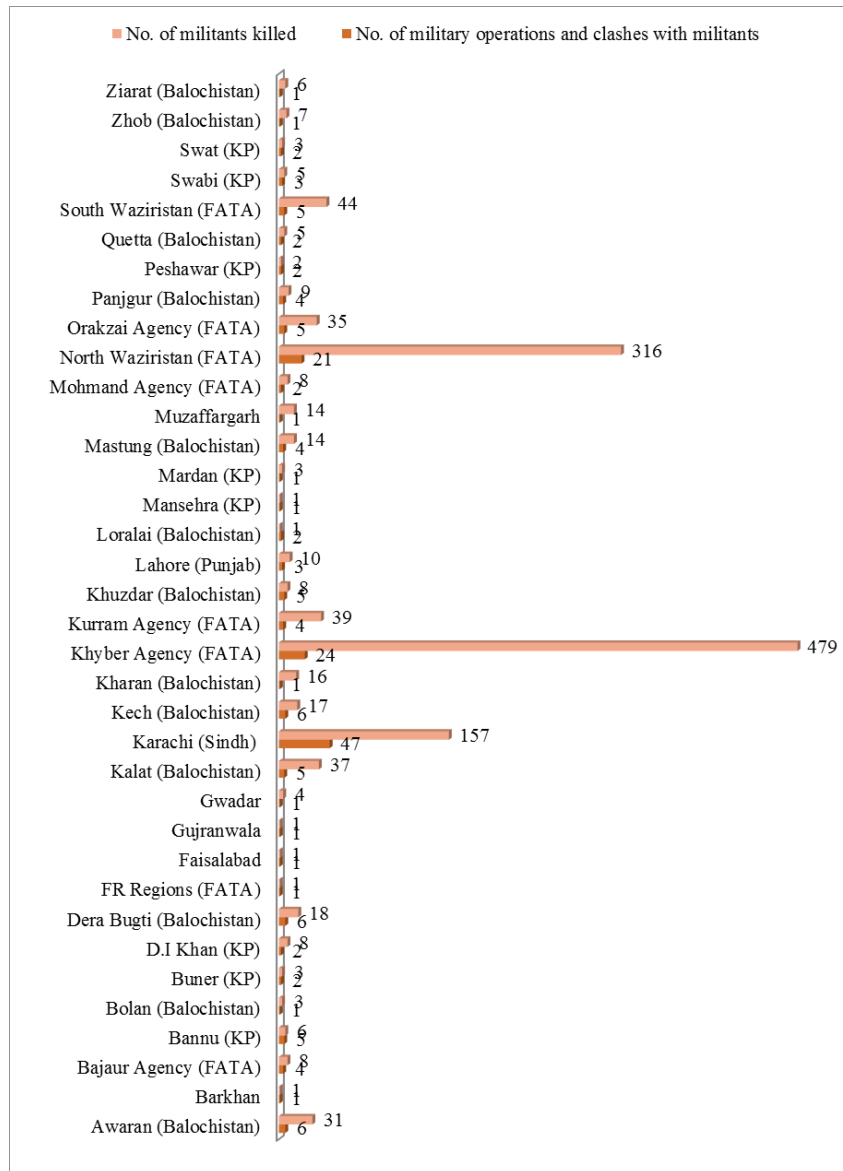
implementing these points are mainly institutional including lack of capacity of related institutions and departments and also lack of coordination among civil and military intelligence agencies. Also, lack of political will is a factor. Political leadership has yet to fully take the ownership of the country's war against terrorism.

- National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) has yet to be fully empowered and the establishment of joint intelligence directorate is only a proposal so far.
- However, in accelerated counterterrorism efforts in KP and FATA, three zones of counterterrorism departments (CTD) were established in March. The provincial government pledged to fight impending militants' activities through CTDs.

2.2.1 Security Operations

Pakistan's security and law enforcement agencies have killed a total of 1,312 militants between January and July this year in as many as 183 operational strikes and clashes with militants, across 41 districts of all four provinces.

Chart: Militants killed in operations and clashes with security forces (Jan. to Jul. 2015)



2.2.3 Specific security measures for CPEC

- Pakistan Army has created a special security division for the protection of Chinese engineers, project directors, experts and workers employed on various Chinese funded projects across Pakistan. According to military sources quoted in media, a total of 10,000 troops have been dedicated to this purpose and a two-star senior military officer, who would report directly to the General Headquarters (GHQ), would head this security division. Out of 10,000 troops, over 5,000 will be from the special services group of Pakistan Army who are specially trained for counter-terrorism and security.¹
- Even before the decision to establish special security division, an estimated 8,000 personnel of police and paramilitary forces have been deployed across the country for the security of more than 8,112

Chinese working in Pakistan on around 210 development projects.²

- Government has in principle agreed that military will take leading role in formulating and implementing security plan for the CPEC in close collaboration with the interior ministry.
- The government has also allocated Rs3.5bn under the latest PSDP (Public Sector Development Program) for special security forces to protect Chinese engineers, project directors, experts and workers employed on various Chinese-funded projects across Pakistan.³ On the whole, the budget plan for 2015-16 describes that as many as 28 wings of Civil Armed Forces will be raised, at the cost of 7.5 billion rupees, to provide security for CPEC and Chinese workers.

3. Developmental progress on CPEC

¹Mateen Haider, "Army's special security division to protect Chinese workers in Pakistan," *Dawn*, Islamabad, April 21, 2015.

² Zahid Gishkori, "Economic corridor: 12,000-strong force to guard Chinese

workers," *Express Tribune*, Islamabad, March 30, 2015.

³ *The News*, Islamabad, Saturday, June 06, 2015.

- Pakistan and China signed 51 agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoUs) of bilateral cooperation in different fields during Chinese president's visit to Pakistan in April 2015. The \$28bn financing agreements will immediately come into the implementation phase because necessary processes have already been completed. These include:⁴
 - 1000MW solar power park in Punjab;
 - 870MW Suki Kanari (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) hydropower project;
 - 720MW Karot (AJK) hydropower project;
 - Three wind power projects at Thatta of United Energy Pakistan (100MW), Sachal (50MW) and Hydro-China (50MW);
 - Chinese government's concessional loans for the second phase up-gradation of Karakorum Highway (Havelian to Thakot);
 - Karachi-Lahore Motorway (Multan to Sukkur), Gwadar Port east-bay expressway project and Gwadar international airport;
 - Provision of material for tackling climate change; and
 - Projects in the Gwadar Port region and establishment of China-Pakistan Joint Cotton Biotech Laboratory and China-Pakistan Joint Marine Research Centre.
- There were reports that development funds and loans from China for the CPEC project could get delayed due to the issue of double taxation and absence of an agreement on exempting Chinese companies from taxes on the profits they make in Pakistan. Federal Board of Revenue argues that it cannot achieve the government-provided targets if complete tax exemption will be provided to Chinese companies.⁵ Pakistani officials were to hold further negotiations with Chinese tax officials and companies in August 2015.
- Similarly there could be issues of bureaucratic hurdles, which might affect smooth functioning of CPEC implementation. Mr Zu Young, president of a Chinese company Zonergy said in

⁴Khaleeq Kiani, "\$28 billion accords for fast-track projects," *Dawn*, April 21, 2015.

⁵ *Daily Dunya* (Urdu), Islamabad, May 19, 2015.

Islamabad on April 22 while sharing his views on the Bahawalpur power project: "These projects can be completed within the stipulated timeframe only when the concerned ministries and departments in Pakistan exhibit a matchless coordination at every phase.⁶

- In this backdrop, government is trying to put in place a ***multi-tier mechanism*** to ensure that CPEC projects do not fall victim to bureaucratic hurdles and delays. 'Prime Minister Delivery Unit' has been established at the PM's Office comprising professionals from public and private sectors and having expertise in CPEC-related projects.⁷ Supervised by the prime minister, the unit will monitor the CPEC projects and provide daily, weekly and monthly progress reports to the prime minister. The Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform, currently headed by Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal, has a leading role in the unit

while the Cabinet Committee on Energy is also a part of it. Chinese and Pakistani working groups have already conceptualized, structured and time-framed all the CPEC projects

- ***Budgetary allocations:*** Headed by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, the National Economic Council (NEC) approved 2015-16's federally funded development program including over two and a half dozen CPEC-related projects. The approved NEC plan shows that the government has included Rs942 billion worth of CPEC projects in the 2015-16 budget and allocated Rs171 billion for spending in the year.⁸ Budgetary allocations for CPEC routes are described below:⁹

- Rs20.8 billion worth of CPEC projects will go to the western route. However the Senate standing committee on finance and revenue later recommended to enhance allocation for the western

⁶ Khalid Mustafa, "High degree of coordination required for making CPEC a success story," *The News*, Islamabad, April 23, 2015.

⁷ Ansar Abbasi, "Multi-tier mechanism in place for timely completion of CPEC

projects," *The News*, Islamabad, May 8, 2015.

⁸ Shahbaz Rana, "Budget 2015-16" 12% of approved funds goes to CPEC's western alignment," *Express Tribune*, Islamabad, June 2, 2015.

⁹ Ibid

route by Rs100 billion under the CPEC so as to fulfill the consensus decision of May-28 All Parties Conference (APC) and the Prime Minister's promise to build this route on a priority basis.¹⁰

- A lion's share of Rs95 billion, or 57% of total CPEC allocations, will go to projects on the eastern corridor. The NEC has approved Rs60.2 billion for the construction of a 387km Multan-Sukkur section of the eastern route. The total cost of this project is Rs259.3 billion. For the 296km Sukkur-Hyderabad section of the eastern route, the NEC allocated Rs10.5 billion. The total cost of the project is Rs148 billion. It approved Rs20 billion for a 230km Lahore-Abdul Hakeem road section.¹¹
- An amount of Rs31.8 billion is proposed for the northern alignment, which is the link

for all the routes. For the construction of 120km Thakot to Havelian section, the NEC approved Rs23.5 billion. The total cost of the project is Rs95.4 billion. For the acquisition of land for this project, the NEC allocated another Rs6 billion.

- Similarly, for construction of the Islamabad-Mianwali-Dera Ismail Khan road, which will link eastern and central routes, the NEC approved Rs10 billion. The total cost of the project is Rs68 billion.¹²
- In order to complete work on the Gwadar Port, the NEC approved eight projects worth Rs41.6 billion and allocated Rs6.8 billion for the next year. These projects include construction of break way waters, capital dredging of berthing areas, infrastructure development for the Export Processing

¹⁰ Mehtab Haider, "Senate panel demands Rs100 bn more for CPEC western route," *The News*, June 12, 2015.

¹¹ Shahbaz Rana, "Budget 2015-16" 12% of approved funds goes to CPEC's

western alignment," *Express Tribune*, Islamabad, June 2, 2015

¹² Ibid.

Zone Authority, Pak-China Technical and Vocational Centre and upgrading of the existing 50-bed hospital to 300-bed at Gwadar. The NEC also approved Rs4.7 billion allocation for the construction of Eastbay Expressway that will link Gwadar with the coastal highway.¹³

➤ Meanwhile work on different parts of the CPEC projects continues. The Planning Commission and other related departments do not provide some specific information about these projects on their websites. However the following paragraphs describe progress on different CPEC projects based on information drawn from media reports, online sources and official statements.

- The work on M-8 (motorway from Gwadar to Rattodero) is underway and is expected to conclude by December 2015. M-8 is connecting Gwadar to Turbat, Panjgur and Khuzdar regions in Balochistan and further

connects to Rattodero, in Sindh.

- The road linking Gwadar to Khuzdar, Quetta and DI Khan is under construction and is expected to be completed till next year, i.e. 2016.¹⁴ The road will further link to Karakorum Highway.
- A couple of sections of the road between Gwadar and Quetta are currently at an advanced stage of construction.
- Work on Peshawar-Karachi motorway project started over 20 years back and effort is being made to complete it in next few years.
- Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif inaugurated in Karachi the first phase of the Karachi-Lahore (M-9) Motorway on March 11, 2015 which will cost Rs. 36 billion. M-9 will facilitate people commuting between Karachi and major cities including Sukkur, Badin, Ghotki, Rohri, Dadu, Pannu Aqil, Abro, Sadiqabad, Rahim Yar Khan, Zahir Pir, Jalalpur Peerwala,

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal was quoted as saying in a report by Asif Iqbal published on BBC Urdu on April 20, 2015.

Abdul Hakim, Mamu Kanjan and Nankana Sahib.

- A feasibility study is underway for the upgrading of Karachi-Peshawar Main Line.
- Survey for route of KKH-I from RaiKot to Khunjerab, which will ultimately link up to the Kashgar, is underway.
- According to details provided by National Highway Authority, Havelian to Khunjerab railway track was approved in September 2014.¹⁵ Currently the work is going on the track.
- E35 Expressway, or the Hazara Motorway, is under construction. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had inaugurated it in November 2014. The motorway will link Hassan Abdal in Punjab with the cities of Haripur, Havelian, Abbottabad, and Mansehra in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- Feasibility study is underway for the Havelian Dry Port.

- The work on 900 MW solar project at Bahawalpur, South Punjab, is going on with 150 Chinese and 100 locals working on the site. This and other similar solar power stations will become a 'solar oasis' in the CPEC.¹⁶

4. Regional perspective

The corridor will certainly improve prospects for regional cooperation in trade and economic projects as well as for peace and stability. Pakistan's refusal to send its troops to Yemen in support of Saudi Arabia, which would have annoyed a neighbor Iran, and efforts to support Afghanistan's reconciliation with the Afghan Taliban are being seen by many as a paradigm shift in Pakistan's regional strategic outlook. Chinese investment and the CPEC are playing a key role in that regard.

There is a perception in Pakistan that China is supporting Pakistan's efforts in establishing good ties with Afghanistan. There were reports in media before Chinese president Xi Jinping's visit to Pakistan on April 20 that Beijing has asked Islamabad to upgrade the proposed plan to construct a road network under the CPEC from six to eight lane arteries

¹⁵ <http://nha.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Confirmed-Minutes-of-238-Executive-Board-Meeting.pdf>.

¹⁶ Khalid Mustafa, "High degree of coordination required for making CPEC a success story," *The News*, Islamabad, April 23, 2015.

extending them to Afghanistan. "That is why Pakistan has decided to increase the number of trade routes with Afghanistan to 16 from the existing four," a report published in a leading English newspaper said.¹⁷ Five new trade routes would be opened in Balochistan and seven in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.¹⁸

Iran has recently expressed its interest in becoming part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor with a view to become part of restoration and expansion of the ancient Silk Route which has historically been a means to transfer trade products and also culture from east to west linking India, China and Pakistan to Mediterranean Sea.¹⁹

Pakistan has also welcomed the agreement on Iran's nuclear program, recently reached between Iran and the six world powers. Pakistan believes that the easing of international sanctions on Iran in the aftermath of the deal could allow Pakistan to complete its part of Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline section, as per the agreement signed in 2013.

At the same time, Iran has again asked India to invest in Iranian Chabahar port,²⁰ which many believe will not only open up Indian access to Afghanistan and Central Asia but also prove a competition for Pakistan's Gwadar port, currently being operated by Chinese companies. In that context, it yet remains to be seen to what extent CPEC and Gwadar port could develop cooperation and connectedness among countries in the region.

India raised objections on the CPEC by summoning Chinese envoy in Delhi to the Ministry of External Affairs, days before the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to China in May. India's objections were linked to CPEC route passing through areas which India believes are still contested including Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.²¹ However, a few weeks before this development, India's high commissioner to Pakistan had said that India had no worries over the construction of CPEC as an economically-strong

¹⁷ Khalid Mustafa, "China tells Pakistan CPEC success depends on peaceful Pak-Afghan ties," *The News*, Islamabad, April 19, 2015.

¹⁸ The existing four trade routes between Pakistan and Afghanistan include Chaman, Torkham, Ghulam Khan and Miran Shah. The Miran Shah route is currently non-functional due to a military operation going on in North Waziristan.

¹⁹ Muhammad Waziri, "Iran's interest in restoration of Silk Route" (as translated from Urdu), BBC Urdu, June 8, 2015, http://www.bbc.com/urdu/world/2015/06/150608_iran_silk_road_sr?ocid=socialflow_facebook.

²⁰ "Iran has offered India bigger role in strategic port, says envoy," *Dawn*, July 18, 2015.

²¹ *Express Tribune*, Islamabad, May 12, 2015.

Pakistan would bring stability to the region.²²

Security experts believe that India is using Baloch insurgents against the development of the CPEC. 'One India', an Indian propaganda website reportedly managed by Indian intelligence agency RAW published an interview of Allah Nazar Baloch – leader of a Baloch insurgent group Baloch Liberation Front (BLF) which is mainly active in areas close to Gwadar including Kech, Awaran and Panjgur – early April this year. The contents of the interview revolved around allegations against Pakistan's security forces, intelligence agencies and Pak-China relations.²³ Analysts claimed that uploading of interview of a Baloch insurgent commander on an Indian website suggested that India had sort of links with the Baloch insurgents, which it could use in future to create security problem for the implementation of CPEC-related projects.

Others believe that despite its instantaneous protest, India will be in the long run influenced positively by the CPEC, and may wish to start or become part of similar projects of regional connectivity in the future. Chinese also think that a successful completion of the CPEC will make easy for China "to pursue India, Bangladesh and Myanmar for the East Asian corridor".²⁴

²² "Indian not threatened by Pakistan-China economic corridor: envoy," *Express Tribune*, Islamabad, April 23, 2015.

²³ Mian Saifur Rehman, "RAW website hits at Pak-China corridor," *The News*, Islamabad, April 5, 2015.

²⁴ Muhammad Amir Rana, "Economic corridor challenges," *Dawn*, May 17, 2015.

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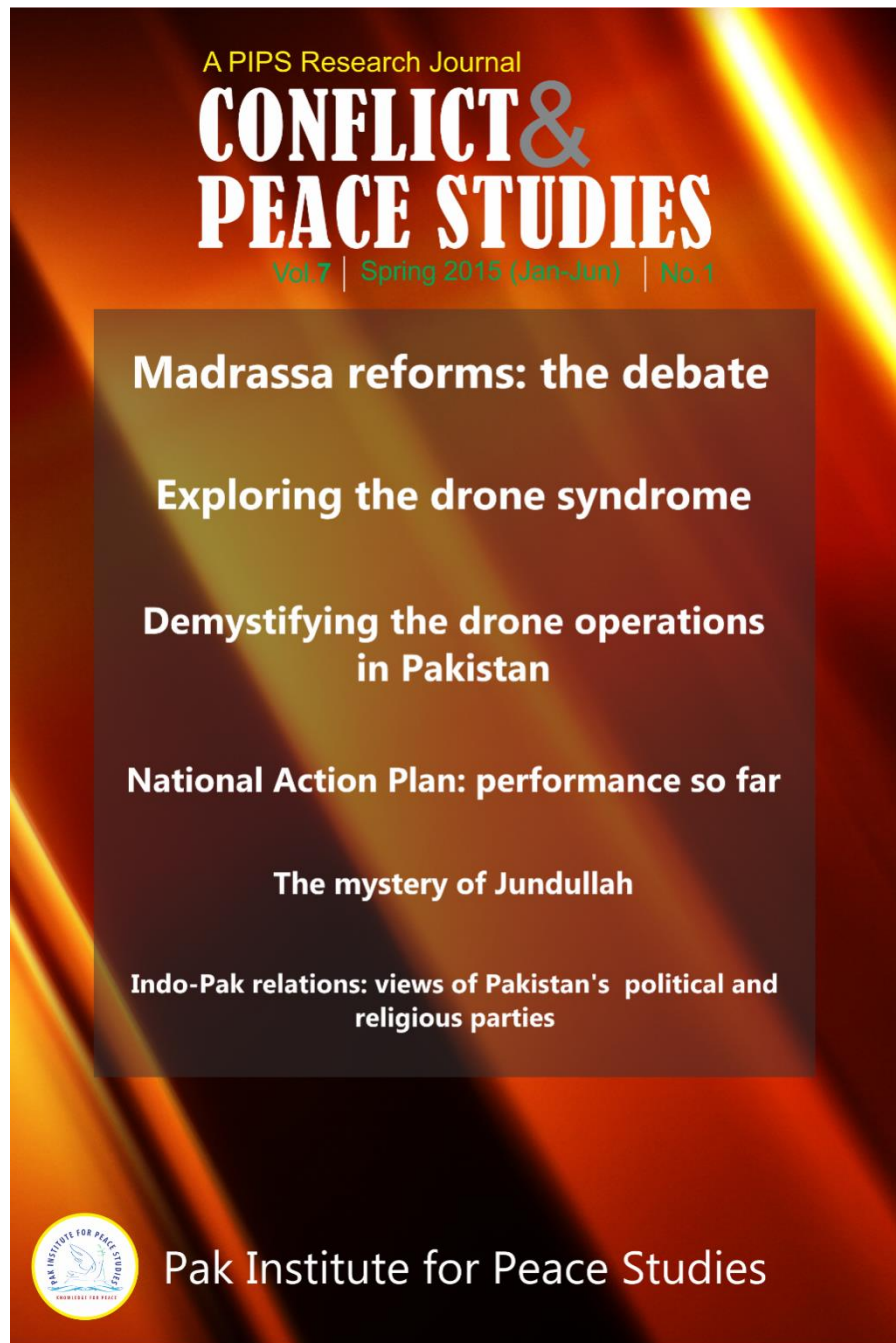
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