

Comprehensive review of NAP

## Establishing a Counter Terrorism Force

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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.<sup>1</sup>

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".<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, there are several paramilitaries responsible for various special tasks ranging from policing the country's border to stopping smuggling.<sup>4</sup>

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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>.

<sup>2</sup> Text of National Internal Security Policy document can be seen at [www.nacta.pk](http://www.nacta.pk).

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

<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> In fact, many countries have raised special police forces with functional specialization for counter- and anti-terrorist operations.<sup>6</sup>

### 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.<sup>7</sup> 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

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<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup>Some 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).

<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup>

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.<sup>9</sup> However, they are distinct from the Elite Police. That is why CTF personnel are normally called as “corporals”, as opposed to “elite.”<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup>

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.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) set up its new special force unit, Counter Terrorism Force (CTF), with an initial strength of 2400 police officers.<sup>13</sup> 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

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<sup>8</sup> Official Website of Elite Police Training School:

<http://elitepolice.net/aboutus.htm>, accessed on 16/6/2015.

<sup>9</sup> “1500 corporals get in Anti-Terrorism Force,” *The Nation*, April 1, 2014.

<sup>10</sup> “Provincial police force: CTD corporals to begin training next week,” *Express Tribune*, May 1, 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Hassan Naqvi, “Counter Terrorism Force: First batch of corporals to pass out

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

<sup>12</sup> Official Website of Special Security Unit:

<http://www.ssusindhpolice.gos.pk/careers.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> 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 2015<sup>14</sup>.

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.<sup>15</sup>

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.<sup>16</sup>

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.<sup>17</sup>

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

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

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

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

<sup>17</sup> "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.