

CSSPR Review

Evaluating Counter Terrorism Strategies: Way Forward for Pakistan

Terrorism is a rationally selected tactic usually employed in the pursuit of ideological objectives. However, some individuals or small violent organizations that employ terrorist means may not always be concerned with particular causes or an avowed ideology. These terrorists may be motivated purely by a desire to commit violent acts. Some terrorists have utopian goals regardless of their aims. This utopianism expresses itself forcefully as an extreme degree of impatience with the status quo of the rest of the world that validates the terrorists' extreme methods. Change, and the destructive method by which change is brought about, may be much more important than the end result.

Pakistan has gone through a rough patch since its very inception in 1947, the golden 50s or socialist 70s, the basic democracies or the modern devolution plans, every model has brought various socio-political and economic challenges along. These challenges, on one hand have evolved the process of resilience among the citizens of Pakistan but on the other have shackled the institutional machinery that's fighting internally and externally to create a sustainable environment for its citizens. Amongst major pressing issues we have had an unfortunate encounter with terrorism and extremism that has not only changed its conventional face but erupting as a stimulating and nerve wrecking agenda for policy makers, legislators and law enforcement agencies.

Immediately after 9/11, Pakistan sided with United States on their 'War on Terror', a component of the theory of Pre-emption. Resultantly, in retaliation various terrorist organizations grouped together to fight against the allies of war on terror. The rise of suicide bombing, threat calls to state and non-state institutions stemmed out consequently and frequently. Factually speaking, not only the peripheries but every part of the country was targeted by terrorists groups. Various attempts, accords and treaties were signed with Taliban and other terrorist groups to make peace with the state but none of the effort seemed accomplished by either the parties. Distortions, mistrust and the intrusion of third unidentified element has always cost a lot to state and the citizens of Pakistan.

APS attack in 2015 gave birth to new dimensions of counter terrorism strategies that began from the APC (All Parties Conference) to take a robust action against the terrorist groups. An institution NACTA (National Counter Terrorism Authority) was established under the interior ministry. NACTA was mandated to devise counter terrorism policies and strategies, among few of its initiatives NAP (National Action Plan) and NISP (National Internal Security Policy) were of great significance. However, to set the premise for both the policies, it was felt imperative that the pre policy study should have been conducted which is hindering the processes of NACTA in

particular. The documents of both the strategies seem impeccable on paper but lacks implementation to some extent. The broad based NISP is all inclusive and support both negotiations and operations against the terrorist groups; moreover, it emphasized more on post operation rehabilitation and reconstruction of the affected area. Other policy objectives were to ensure the writ of the state, and secure the citizens from all internal as well as external and threats, to protect the fundamental rights of the citizens, to promote democratic values, trends of tolerance and pluralism, to prevent, deter and limit the threats to internal security in a transparent, just and accountable way. To achieve these objectives, the policy framework was comprised of Hard Component (Composite Deterrence Plan) and Soft Component (Comprehensive Response Plan). To fulfill these two policy frameworks a strong civil military coordination was required which couldn't be witnessed but few eminent military operations were carried out, 3 of them have concluded already (Operation Rah-e-Rast, Operation Rast, Operation Zarb-e-Azab) and Operation Raddul Fasad is in process to counter terrorist groups. The policy in a nutshell focused more on negotiations and peaceful means to resolve the conflict with terrorist groups.

To ensure peace, to initiate the system of prompt justice and the execution of extremists convicted in the acts of terrorism, National Action Plan was devised which was multifold. Special military courts were set up to decide the matters and acts of terrorism in the country. The prohibition of the formation of armed militia, a crackdown on hate speech on social, electronic and print media, accounts sealed of banned outfits, measures to be taken to counter religious extremism, rehabilitation of IDPs, destruction of communication networks of terrorist groups, for political reconciliation, Baluchistan government to be given complete authority to negotiate with all stakeholders, registration of Afghan refugees, access of information of provincial intelligence agencies and constitutional amendments and legislations for counter terrorism strategies will be carried out.

After a complete understanding of the counter terrorism efforts and attempts made by the government, state and the armed forces of Pakistan, the grey areas are still presenting the blur image which needs to be transformed into black and white so that policies and strategies are made transparent for the citizens and for all the institutions. For military operations, the Sri Lankan tactic of Push back and Isolation can be adopted to avoid collateral damage. For a swift and smooth policy implementation civil military relations should be on more transparent lines that promote cooperation and coordination among the institutions. Residents of the concerned affected area should also be taken into confidence before the initiation of any operation, policy and strategy so that a culture of pluralism and all-inclusiveness can be enhanced in the country. Some of affected areas were left stranded after the operation that needs to be rehabilitated and reconstructed. There are certain issues that are of sensitive nature, those should rest with the institution unless it's completely ejected and implemented for security reasons. Media, and civil society are ought to be responsible in maintaining peace instead of creating panic and chaos in an already turbulent situation. NACTA has recently started visiting the educational institutions to

have research and evaluation assistance from the academia that exudes a warm and constructive step to incorporate the intellectual elite in the policy making. A broad based surveillance project has also been initiated by the Punjab Government which can be of great significance to unveil the culprits who are terrorizing the citizens. It's not always the government or law enforcement agencies who are responsible for the security of its citizens and the country but a vigilant individual effort by all citizens is equally required.

With the emergence of international terrorist groups; Daesh, ISIS and Boko Haram, International and regional organizations should set up a joint global forum to fight the menace of terrorism. Developed, developing and under developed countries are fighting against terrorism individually, a collective effort according to set patterns of United Nations would be a concrete step instead. Foreign policies should of such nature that makes terrorist groups reluctant to challenge the writ of state or to dismantle the security apparatus. Moreover, revision of foreign policies and policy study are also rational processes to evaluate a policy or strategy that can pave way for more accurate end results and future course of action. Rigidity, policies of containment and isolation not only disrupts the global relations among the states but it also weakens the strength of a nation in the setup of global village.

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