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Pakistan: Effective & Sustainable Counterterrorism

Dr. Hassan Abbas

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“Extremis malis extrema remedia,” is how a famous Latin saying goes, expressing the idea that “extreme situations require extreme remedies”. This sounds logical on the face of it but in reality it is a myth. Over the years, I have heard from so many Pakistani friends that “Pakistan needs an Imam Khomeini,” implying that nothing short of a bloody revolution, which may take thousands of lives, is going to work for the country. Those who make this argument know little about the causes that led to the Islamic revolution in Iran – or, for that matter, the factors leading to the French or Russian revolutions.

The idea of military courts to tackle terrorism is a similar notion, based on the fallacy that the use of hard power can deliver goods under all circumstances. Military means can indeed be – and, perhaps, must be – part of the solution when it comes to

counterterrorism efforts in Pakistan. But the nature and extent of Pakistan's terrorism problem requires a much broader, comprehensive, and long-term solution.

In the same vein, the government's newfound zeal for executing those convicted of terrorism is a sop to those asking for extreme remedies. Death by guillotine has never been an effective counterterrorism tool, and it never will be. Radicalization and misdirected religious zeal need a different set of solutions. Simply put, an extremist state of mind that took decades to nurture and develop cannot be cured overnight through quick-fix measure such as hangings and military courts.

Dynamics of a counterterrorism policy

It is true that Pakistani policymakers are far clearer today about the roots and dynamics of terrorism in the country than before, and denial of reality is less of a serious challenge now than it was earlier. Still, it will be a while before this developing consensus against terrorism can mature into policies and strategies that really can rid the country of terrorism. Military operations in North Waziristan targeting the infrastructure of the Pakistani Taliban – as important and critical as it is – is only a tactical maneuver. Similarly, the public pronouncements after the Peshawar school tragedy are the beginning of a potential transformation in policy. On their own, these statements do not yet constitute a coherent policy.

For a counterterrorism policy to be effective, the government must realize that for too long Pakistan has paid a heavy price for its lackluster approach in facing militancy head on. The security and intelligence sector, too, has been quite unimaginative when it comes to its core mission of safeguarding the country from internal threats. Its overly imaginative concerns about external threats have sapped its energy and professional capabilities. In defense circles, any interpretations that point out these gaps are deemed unpatriotic and unworthy of any serious consideration. Only exposure to other narratives and open mindedness can treat this fixation.

While all eyes must be focused on the future, a clear understanding and recognition of past mistakes is necessary. An open national dialogue on the subject, which is slowly taking shape thanks to electronic and print media, must continue without fear or favor.

Pakistan's current counterterrorism resolve, indeed, has the potential to transform into an effective policy. But for that to happen, the country's leadership – both political and military – will have to adjust their priorities and make some compromises. The key components for any effective counterterrorism policy to come together are public awareness about what has been going on so far, as well as the possible consequences of what may happen in the future. Given that the country's rampant

insecurity and its negative economic consequences may have already started galvanizing people behind a robust policy to root out terrorism, such awareness creation is likely to find a ready audience. The most important stepping stone for such an awareness campaign should be the creation and propagation of a strong narrative on who the Taliban are and why they are the enemies of both the state and the society.

***Knowing the enemy**

The genesis of the Pakistani Taliban owes a great deal to the history of lawlessness, tribalism, and Pakistan's perennial neglect of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas [FATA]. Genuine political and economic grievances, coupled with Pakistan's controversial role in the 'war on terror' in Afghanistan, have turned out to be the defining impetus. Their fake claim to religious knowledge allows them to bend religion the way they want, and mixing Islam up with their tribal cultural values has made it a successful enterprise.

Despite their capacity to conduct attacks anywhere in the country, including on the most sensitive of security targets, the Pakistani Taliban are not a mainstream force and are unable to develop into a wider political movement. While they face certain fractures due to the making and breaking of tribal alignments in FATA, their strength also lies in having foreign warriors, especially Arabs and Uzbeks, in their ranks. The Punjabi Taliban, which also recruit from among retired security officials and educated urban professionals, have added a lethal capability to the Pakistani Taliban. The Pakistani Taliban fit perfectly into the category of 'terrorist organization.' Joining the battlefield in Syria is a new craze among its followers. Despite some differences in approach and outlook, the various Taliban factions in Pakistan and Afghanistan share information, logistics, and (at times) manpower resources. They rent weapons to each other and coordinate recruitment of suicide bombers. They also coordinate the targeting of those who challenge their ideas. Attacks on peace jirgas and assassinations of progressive elements on both sides of the Durand Line are now the norm. Tribal ethos, Pashtun ethnic chauvinism, radical religious doctrine, and political-cum-economic grievances provide a bond for this new generation of warriors.

The common thread running through the various Taliban factions is their strategy, which relies heavily on the perception of inevitability and a lack of time constraints. The funding streams of the Taliban – private donors in the Gulf, the illicit drug economy and extortion rackets in major economic hubs such as Karachi – provide them with a sustainable basis of support that not only enhances their capacity for insurgency and terror, but also connects them across the region.

Streamlining counterterrorism strategy

Along with narrative creation and generating awareness, the government must take concerted steps to streamline sectors such as judiciary and policing. Many other states have gone through terrorism related challenges, and Pakistan should not shy away from learning from them. One document that can provide a broad outline for an effective counterterrorism policy is the Rabat Memorandum on Good Practices for Effective Counterterrorism Practice in the Criminal Justice Sector. This memorandum was developed in a February 2012 meeting of the Global Counterterrorism Forum, a multilateral “platform that focuses on identifying critical civilian [counterterrorism] needs, mobilizing the necessary expertise, and resources to address such needs and enhance global cooperation.” The forum comprises 29 countries, including Pakistan.

As a participant in the Rabat Memorandum, Pakistan should diligently put into practice the following recommendations by the forum:

1. Protect victims, witnesses, informants, undercover agents, juries, investigators, prosecutors, defense counsel, and judges in counterterrorism cases.
2. Encourage cooperation and coordination among domestic government agencies that have responsibilities or information relevant to counterterrorism.
3. Provide a legal framework and practical measures for electronic surveillance in counterterrorism investigations.
4. Provide for the lawful exercise of pre-trial detention of terrorist suspects.
5. Develop practices and procedures to encourage international cooperation in counterterrorism matters.

One thing that these guidelines make clear is that there is no shortcut to developing a sound counterterrorism strategy. Military and intelligence services can play a vital role in supporting the civilian law enforcement organizations in following these guidelines. But, as stated in a Rand Corporation (*How Terrorist Groups End*), effective police and intelligence work, rather than the use of military force, deliver better counterterrorism results.

By following a policing and judicial system that, according to reputed think-tanks and global forums, are necessary for counterterrorism, the Pakistani government can set the ball rolling for bringing about peace in the country. At the same time, however, it will have to focus on five additional critical factors that can enable it to devise a functional and sustainable counterterrorism policy. These factors are as follows:

1. The roots of militancy and extremism in Pakistan are inextricably linked to regional

conflicts. Therefore, there is no denying the fact that any effective policy will have to cater to regional dynamics as well. Pakistan, however, must start by setting its own house in order. The terrorism problem in Pakistan is the most serious one in the region.

2. Pakistan's military establishment arguably is now more focused on achieving its counterterrorism objectives than it was in the past and, in the process, it is trying to stop distinguishing between "good Taliban" and "bad Taliban." The political and bureaucratic elites, which have developed their own priorities to remain relevant to domestic power politics, will also need to make such a shift.

3. In parallel to countering terrorism through criminal justice system, de-radicalization programs through economic and, especially, educational measures will be critical. There is no readymade formula available for the Pakistani situation. The government will have to invest in scholars and researchers from the relevant fields to figure out the most suitable model. Only professionals should lead de-radicalization projects.

4. Pakistan will need international support in this endeavor, and the area where this international support is needed the most is in the field of forensics. The government must send its law enforcement officials to international training institutes for this purpose and do so at a scale that is at least similar to what is available to the armed forces for training opportunities abroad.

5. Merely arguing that the Pakistani Taliban, al Qaeda, and the Islamic State in Syria (ISIS) are distorting Islamic teachings and beliefs is insufficient for counterterrorism purposes. A counter narrative crafted by progressive and educated religious scholars, challenging the credibility and devious messaging of extremists, is another urgent task awaiting State support.

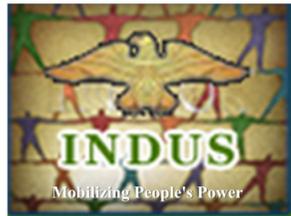
Bureaucrats – both civilian and military – have a tendency to assume that they have answers to every situation, provided they are given the authority and resources. That has been a bane of Pakistan. For developing and promoting a counter narrative to extremism and bigotry, the fields of art, culture and literature are far more powerful mediums than bureaucratic and administrative measures. Pakistan has no dearth of talent in these fields.

In the religious sphere also, many poetic and literary works of Sufi saints are available that can pose serious theological challenge to the extremist narrative. It is ironic how Pakistan has failed to utilize such treasures not only to defeat extremism but also to promote pluralism and religious harmony.

**An excerpt from the author's book, [The Taliban Revival](#)*

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Why I became a Life Member - Dr. M. Masood Akbar, MD



I am pleased to be associated with **INDUS - Mobilizing People's Power**. I am happy to see such organizations rise to the challenge of eradicating decades-old deficiencies and fundamental issues of good governance that, despite its sixty eight years of independent existence, Pakistan still faces today. Our leadership as well as our society have, thus far, failed to address the need for a shared vision and nation building. It is time we get back to basics and get our house in order. I wish **INDUS – Mobilizing People's Power** all the success and offer my full support.

Dr. Akbar, a graduate of King Edward Medical College in Lahore, Pakistan, served his residency in Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery - at Temple University in Philadelphia. Dr. Akbar is certified by the Board of Otolaryngology, he is a fellow of the American Academy of Facial Plastic and

MEDIA REVIEW

Geo-tagging of 3,662 Madressas Completed in Sindh, CM Told

In efforts to tackle illegal activities, 3,662 madressas have been geo-tagged under the National Action Plan (NAP) in Sindh. Earlier this month, in a meeting to review the NAP, Inspector General (IG) of the Sindh Police, Ghulam Hyder Jamali and provincial home secretary, Mukhtiar Ahmed Soomro briefed the Chief Minister (CM), Syed Qaim Ali Shah about the geo-tagging process, illegal Afghan nationals, and the identification of banned religious organizations. In addition, the IG informed the CM about the weapons provided to the Sindh police by the army chief. [[Dawn](#)]

Hitch a Night Ride for Free... With Hyderabad's Dynamic Duo

Aashique Ali and friend, Zafar Ali of Hyderabad devote their nights to providing free transportation for those who cannot afford rickshaws, on their motorcycle. Aashique Ali, who works at a motorbike auto repair shop during the day, saves 250 rupees daily to support the cost of their night rides. Ten years ago, a lonely young boy asked Aashique Ali and Zafar Ali for a ride to Hyderabad. Inspired by this event, the two continue to commit their service for social good. [[Dawn](#)]

India-Pakistan: Hyphenated

Based on the present conflict between India and Pakistan Munir Akram suggests that, “the US should stop India’s militarization and seek military de-escalation and arms control in South Asia. But to succeed in this objective, it will need to put the hyphen back in its policies towards India and Pakistan. Strategic restraint by Pakistan will be possible only if it is mutual and reciprocal with India.” [[Dawn](#)]

Labour Selects Son of a Pakistani Bus Driver to Stand for London Mayor

The Labour party of London, United Kingdom selected Sadiq Khan as its candidate earlier this month. Khan, of Pakistani decent and also the son of a bus driver, is a former human rights lawyer who vows to address issues of inequality by investing in infrastructure if elected. Additionally, another Muslim candidate, Syed Kamall, also plans to contest for candidacy from the Conservative Party, once approved by the party. [[Tribune](#)]

Pakistani-American Leads Silicon Valley's Top High-Tech Incubator Y-Combinator

Born in Pakistan, Qasar Younis moved to the US at age six where his parents worked as blue-collar workers in the auto industry. Years later, Younis's startup, TalkBin, was given \$7 million from Y-Combinator, a Silicon Valley based seed fund that invests in startup companies, however was later acquired by Google. After a stint with the Google Maps team, Younis is now the new Chief Operating Officer of Y-Combinator, which plans to incubate 222 startups, including a Pakistani start-up Markhor this year. [[Riaz Haq](#)]

These Pakistani Super Women Are Changing How People Around the World View Pakistanis

Mariam Saeed Khan presents a list of 22 exceptionally hardworking Pakistani women who not only present a change in perception of Pakistanis, but also serve as pioneers and leaders in their respective fields. The list includes powerful Pakistani women from across the arts, political, medical, journalism, and finance professions. [[Mango Baaz](#)]

Putin Opens New Mosque in Moscow Amid Lingering Intolerance

Despite challenges including public opinion on Muslim extremists, opposition from the mayor, and construction costs, Moscow opened a new Mosque this month.

The Mosque, otherwise known as the Moscow Cathedral Mosque, can hold up to 10,000 people on three stories. Moscow, considered to be the largest Muslim city in Europe, was home to only four existing Mosques before the new Mosque, making it difficult to accommodate approximately two million Muslims. [[NY Times](#)]

Why Has Pakistan Become So Intolerant?

Pakistan's military Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) beat Titus Presler, former president of Edwardes College in Peshawar, because of his religion. Presler addresses the larger question at hand: why has Pakistan continued to attack religious minorities since its creation? Pakistani government officials are willing to violate their constitution's declaration for religious freedom to appease Islamic religious extremism. Presler explains how Pakistan continues to violate religious freedom, ultimately resulting in harsh consequences for religious minorities. [[The Daily Beast](#)]

Pakistan's Donald Trump

Political commentator, John Dean describes Republican Party nominee, Donald Trump as "manipulative, dishonest, mean-spirited." It is not difficult to see how Trump mirrors his Pakistani counterpart, cricketer Imran Khan. Trump and Khan

warrant racial and religious extremists in their respective ways. The former leader of the Ku Klux Klan shows support to Trump meanwhile Khan draws support from the TTP. The author discusses what it is about such leaders that allows for such large followings. [[Dawn](#)]

The Power of Prayer—and Chemotherapy

Dr. Kirk Zachary draws on his experiences with his son Noah, who was diagnosed with cancer at a young age. Distraught with worry for his son, Dr. Zachary turned to prayer and used faith as a language to connect with God.

Through the power of chemotherapy and the power of prayer, Noah was able to overcome his illness. Just as chemotherapy is a cure to cancer, Dr. Zachary reminds readers to understand prayers as a cure to damaged souls. [[Wall Street Journal](#)]

OUR FOCUS

Youth Leadership Development

Creating campus-based, strictly nonpolitical Student Government Associations that offer functional Executive, Legislative, and Judiciary experiences within a campus environment, including the election of student representatives as Members of Parliament and Judges to manage all aspects of student affairs, in conjunction with campus administration.

Pakistan Civil Liberties Union

Civil liberties are personal guarantees and freedoms that the government cannot abridge, either by law or by judicial interpretation. However in today's Pakistan, violence, intolerance, weak rule of law, endemic corruption, and a lack of religious freedom and social and economic justice have become routine. The Pakistan Civil Liberties Union (PCLU) is a watchdog organization that will combat these issues at every level of society.

Policy Research – As It Happens

Campus-based political and social sciences research. Graduate Student and Faculty focusing on policy issues for possible social, cultural, and political reform, followed by advocacy action and awareness creation by the same researchers for the purposes of legislative reform as appropriate.

Cultivating Early Awareness

Aimed at increasing youngsters' awareness of rights and responsibilities of

citizenship, and building a national bond at a very impressionable age, leading to real benefits to the nation in evolving future leadership.

As always, thank you for reading, and thank you for your efforts. If you have questions or comments, or desire to participate in any way, please don't hesitate to contact us at induspk.usa@gmail.com.

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