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Strategies in Pakistan: A Critical Appraisal of National
Action Plan.**

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Dedicated

to the triangle of my love:

my Mor, my Baba,

&

my Brothers & Sisters!

ABSTRACT

This study explores and evaluates the effectiveness of the Counterterrorism (CT) policies of Pakistan, particularly, the National Action Plan (NAP) and military operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Tribal districts in the Pakistan-Afghanistan borderland. In this study, I argue that there is dearth of literature on the evaluation of effectiveness of CT policies particularly in the case of Pakistan. Using Eric Van Um & Daniela Pisiou's Model of Effectiveness (2015), with concepts like *Output effectiveness*, *Outcome effectiveness* and *Impact effectiveness*, in this dissertation I argue that NAP and military operations in Tribal districts have been partially effective as it restored the government writ in different parts of the country and resulted in a steep decline in terrorist incidents. However, the plan is not highly effective as the threat of terrorism and extremism still exist. I also argue that the hard or military aspects of the NAP was executed soon after the plan was announced, however, to implement the soft aspects of the plan a lot still needs to be done. Nevertheless, CT policies of Pakistan failed to take into consideration the social and cultural aspects of Tribal districts. Therefore, I also contend that NAP and military operations in the Tribal districts resulted into socio-cultural transformation. The study significantly contributes empirical data to the existing literature and is qualitative in nature while based on 30 in-depth semi-structured interviews with policymakers, lawyers, academics, and locals from the Tribal districts. The

interviews were conducted virtually through online tools and no face-to-face meetings were held as part of this dissertation.

Keywords: Terrorism & Counterterrorism Policies, Effectiveness, National Action Plan, Socio-Cultural Transformation, Pakistan

DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

- APS – Army Public School
CI – Counter Insurgency
CT – Counterterrorism
CTF – Counter Terrorism Force
FATA – Federally Administrated Tribal Areas
FBR – Federal Board of Revenue
FCR – Frontier Crimes Regulations
FIA – Federal Investigation Agency
KP – Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
IDPs – Internally Displaced People
ISI – Inter-Services Intelligence
ISIS – Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISPR – Inter-Services Public Relations
JeM – *Jaish-e-Mohammad*
JuD – *Jumat-ud-Dawa*
NADRA – National Database and Registration Authority
NAP – National Action Plan
PATA – Provincially Administered Tribal Areas
PML-N – Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz)
PPP – Pakistan Peoples Party
PTM – Pashtun *Tahfuz* Movement
TNSM – *Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Shariate-Muhammadi*
TTP – *Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan*
TLP – *Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan*
US – United States
USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WoT – War on Terror

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Fazal Wahab

1. CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

Pakistan is faced with terrorism and extremism since the end of Cold War; however, the threat became intense after the September 11, attacks on twin towers in the United States (US) and the declaration of the so-called ‘War on Terror’ (WoT) by the US in Afghanistan. As a direct repercussion militant violence spilled over from Afghanistan to Pakistan particularly to the neighbouring Pashtun populated region, including the erstwhile Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA)¹, referred to hereafter as Tribal districts, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province of Pakistan. These places became safe havens for the terrorists (Khan, 2011, pp. 130–131). In the Tribal districts, the foundation of the *Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan* (TTP: Afghan Taliban-linked group in Pakistan) was laid down. This group started lethal attacks across the country while targeting government and state officials, politicians and leaders hostile to them, and educational institutions particularly of girls and run by Pakistani military and Police.

In response the Pakistani state and government signed controversial peace deals with the militants, which provided militants space to expand their influence further. Eventually, the Pakistan military and state conducted military

¹ FATA has been merged with the KP province of Pakistan after the 25th constitutional amendment (for details see Ghauri and Hussain, 2018; Wasim, 2018; Wahab, Azim and Jan, 2020, p. 18).

operations like *Al- Mezan, Zalazala, Sher Dil* etc – in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Tribal districts. Though these military offensives resulted in temporary reduction in terror attacks, however, the country has so far failed to end terrorism in the region (Khan, 2011, p. 131). Moreover, as a result of these operations, Pakistan was faced with mass displacement of people in millions, consequently, inhabitants of the conflict-ridden areas suffered the most (for details see Gul, 2006; Dawn, 2009b; Khattak, 2012).

Ironically, though Pakistan has been actively involved in fighting terrorism since 2001, it lacked a published counterterrorism (CT) policy until 2014, which is one of the potential reasons for different scholars and researchers questioning Islamabad's position on the CT efforts. Pakistan issued its first ever comprehensive policy in 2014, known as 'National Internal Security Policy', which gives guidelines to fight terrorism and extremism among other threats to the country. Soon after the Army Public School (APS) attack in Peshawar in December 2014, both government and opposition came to common ground and issued a 20-point National Action Plan (NAP) which lists different measures to be adopted to fight terrorism and extremism effectively (NACTA, 2014).

The government started working on the implementation of the plan immediately afterwards. It was particularly more aggressive and focused on the implementation of hard measures such as military operations, the establishment of military courts etc. Media reports, think tanks and NGOs have assessed the success of the plan by using different indicators, while some academic scholars

have also worked on the evaluation of the CT policies of Pakistan (this is discussed under the section of literature review below). However, a critical academic study that assesses the effectiveness of NAP, is required both for academic and policy reasons. It is in this context that the present study critically evaluates and assesses the effectiveness of the NAP as a component of Pakistan's CT policies. Below is a brief statement of this research problem.

1.2. Statement of Problem

Pakistan is fighting religious terrorism actively since 2001 by adopting both 'soft' and 'hard' approaches. Soft approaches in this regard include focusing on dialogues with militants and peace agreements while hard approaches underscore conducting military and intelligence operations in the country with a focus on KP and the newly merged Tribal districts. However, these policies had not worked and did not last longer in tackling the complex issue of extremism and militancy also primarily because of the lack of a proper and documented CT policy. In 2014, after the massacre of school children in APS attack in Peshawar, Pakistan formulated a CT policy known as the NAP. However, it has now been over seven years since this policy was formulated but the threat of terrorism still exists. Therefore, there is a need of an academic study to evaluate the CT policy of Pakistan while focusing on its most significant component, that is the NAP, and its consequences on Pashtun regions in general and on the inhabitants of the Tribal districts near Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

- a. To critically evaluate National Action Plan, a counterterrorism policy of Pakistan, and its effectiveness.
- b. To highlight and investigate consequences of the National Action Plan for Pashtun population of the region.

1.4. Research Questions

The primary question under investigation in this research is: *To what extent has the National Action Plan been effective in countering terrorism and preventing extremism?* A few supporting and secondary questions evolve from the main research question:

- To what extent the National Action plan has been implemented?
- To what extent the National Action Plan has addressed terrorism and extremism?
- What are the consequences of the National Action Plan for Pashtun population of the region?

1.5. Significance of the Study

Religious militancy and extremism are one of the greater threats to the national security and sovereignty of Pakistan. During the last couple of decades Pakistan has lost 83,000 lives and suffered \$126 billion (Jamal, 2021). Pakistan

has taken soft and hard approaches in fighting terrorism, but the threat still exists as demonstrated by the recent terrorist attacks in Peshawar and Quetta (Baloch, 2020; BBC News, 2021b). This study is of great practical and academic importance due to its efforts to evaluate the CT policies of Pakistan, and to examine the shortcomings of these policies. This dissertation is also important as it will contribute to lacunae in the literature on policy effectiveness, and most importantly it will contribute to the existing literature with research-led policy recommendations. Additionally, it is significant because it evaluates the impacts of such policies, the NAP, on civilian people living in the region which are not directly aligned with either militants or the military.

1.6. Background of the Study

The recent terrorism and extremism history in Pakistan can be traced back to the Cold War era when Pakistan became a staunch ally of the US and provided every possible support to fight the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) (McMahon, 1988, pp. 812–840; Alavi, 1998, pp. 1551–1557; Sunawar and Coutto, 2015, pp. 1–12), after their invasion of Afghanistan. The US used “all means available” (Pear, 1988) to promote fundamentalist and extremist *Wahhabi* version of Islam in Pakistan with the help of some Middle Eastern countries, particularly Saudi Arabia and Egypt (Pear, 1988). Saudi Arabia spent \$4 billion annually on sponsoring and funding the religious institutes, mosques and religious seminaries to indorse an extremist version of Islam which helped in providing a steady supply of the then *mujahideen* to the Afghan guerrilla war

against the USSR (Greentree, 2019). One of the reasons for Saudi Arabia's involvement in the propagation of the Wahhabi version of Islam was the 1979 Islamic (Shia) revolution in Iran, because of which the Saudi monarch felt threatened (Weddington, 2017, p. 20).

After the disintegration of the USSR and by the end of the Cold War, the US left the then *mujahideen*, in both Pakistan and Afghanistan, on their own. Pakistan had to face the consequences of the civil war in Afghanistan (Abbas, 2015, p. 146). The former US ambassador to Afghanistan, Peter Tomsen, argued and questioned the US walking away from Afghanistan so quickly without considering the consequences. He was also arguably worried that the vacuum created after the US walks away would be filled by those dangerous extremists (Murphy, 2013, p. 115). Pakistan retained close ties with the *mujahideen* (now Taliban) and was even among one of the three countries – the other two being Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates – who recognised the Taliban government that lasted from 1996 to 2001 (BBC News, 2020). It is contended that one of the reasons of Pakistan's support for the Taliban regime in Afghanistan was the Taliban's religious tendency and devotion which "made them natural allies, particularly against India" (Murphy, 2013, p. 113). However, some officers of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan also contended that they could defeat India in Kashmir the way they defeated the Soviets in Afghanistan (Lieven, 2011, p. 189).

Furthermore, the US supplied stinger missiles (Fitchett, 2001) and other sophisticated weapons such as mortars, anti-craft guns, millions of rounds of ammunition, rocket-propelled grenade launchers and even surface-to-air missiles to the *mujahideen* against the Soviets. These were later used by anti-Indian Taliban and sectarian groups in Kashmir and within Pakistan respectively (Sidky, 2007, pp. 859–861). In 1980s, terrorism in Pakistan was characterised by sectarian violence against the Shia² minority in different parts of the country. The tug of power between political parties particularly the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) (PML-N), and weak governments coupled with the Islamisation of Zia ul Haq and “fallout from the Afghan Jihad” resulted in a disaster for Pakistan (Murphy, 2013, p. 117).

Sectarian violence was a common practice in 1980s across the country and thousands of Shias were killed and injured by different Sunni groups. The violence had a significant impact on the roots of the society and political atmosphere. Weak governments of PPP and PML-N contributed to regression of law and order, crimes, and violence which gave more space to the sectarian groups to operate across the country. Police were unable to retain law and order

² (Shia constitutes 10% of Muslim across the globe who believes that Hazrat Ali (the third caliphate of Islam) was the right successor of Prophet Muhammad. for details see Council on Foreign Relations, no date)

but interestingly these political parties also protected different sectarian leaders for their short-term political gains (Nasr, 2002, p. 96; Talbot, 2005, p. 160; Grare, 2007, p. 130; Murphy, 2013, pp. 117–136). Moreover, even some religious movements, for instance, *Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Shariate-Muhammadi* (TNSM)³, started anti-government campaigns in the 1990s. This can be placed in the context of Taliban regime in Afghanistan in 1996. Though the state was able to maintain some law-and-order situation while dismantling some of these groups, though not all, the ideological narratives had seeped into the society deeper. Moreover, the event of 11 September 2001, at the turn of century, has intensified the issue for both Pakistan and Afghanistan.

1.7. Terrorism and Extremism after 9/11

The September 11, 2001, attack, and the declaration of the so-called WoT changed and pushed the region once again into an active war. After the US invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan again became a frontline US ally and provided every possible support similar to what it provided during the Cold War. The US pressurised Islamabad for Operation Enduring Freedom, the US led operation to overthrow the Taliban's regime in Afghanistan (Musharraf, 2006, pp. 201–202). This operation was somewhat successful, however, both Pakistan and the US failed to capture important Al-Qaeda leaders and other

³ (Later TNSM along with other organisations was banned. for details see Haider and Suhrawardy, 2002)

members who fled to safe haven (Urbancic, 2007) in Pakistan, particularly the Tribal districts (Khan, 2011, pp. 130–131). These terrorist groups started targeting Pakistani state apparatus, politicians, government officials and even common men to spread terror. To justify all this with the nexus of local religious authorities these groups even issued *fatwas*⁴ (edict), for killing the then president of Pakistan, General Parvez Musharraf (Rashid, 2008, p. 270), and the US armed forces near the Afghan border (*Herald*, 2004, p. 62) which in turn led to military operations by the Pakistan army in the Tribal districts and killing of several militants (Amir, 2004). After killing of several militants, a leader emerged known as Baitullah Mehsud, who laid the foundation of TTP to which 27 other local terrorists' organisation pledged (Siddique, 2010). This group created havoc and spread violence in the region by killing people, bombing buildings, bazars, educational institutions and even beheading its opponents in the country (Walsh, 2011; Ahmad, 2012; Dawn, 2012; The Express Tribune, 2016; Khan and Masood, 2018). Pakistan army eventually signed peace accords (Dawn, 2007), however, these soon failed and Taliban continued suicide attacks across the country (Warrick, 2008).

On other hand after the US invasion of Afghanistan, some radical clerics such as Sufi Muhammad, leader of the TNSM, gathered thousands of

⁴ (Fatwa is a non-binding legal opinion on a specific question issued by recognized Islamic scholars. In security studies, it is usually used as a synonym for edict. for details see Hamblin and Peterson, 2016)

volunteers, including Fazlullah who later became the chief of TTP, by demonstrating in different cities of KP and led them to Afghanistan to fight against the US. Interestingly, the then Governor of KP Iftikhar Hussain Shah, gave orders to not stop Sufi Muhammad and his volunteers from crossing the border (Afridi, Yousufi and Khan, 2014, p. 2003). Many of these terrorists died while some were detained and later sent to Guantanamo prison (Ali and Naveed, 2010, pp. 94–95). Some of them were able to run back to Pakistan through the porous Pakistan-Afghanistan border and supported the formation of TTP. Pakistani state was soon involved in dealing with these militants through its CT strategies.

1.8. Counterterrorism Strategies and its Evolution in Pakistan

Defining CT is a complex phenomenon and there is no universally accepted definition or agreement because “every conflict involving terrorism has its own unique characteristics” (Wilkinson, 2011, p. 204). According to the Oxford English dictionary, as quoted by Kelman, CT strategies can be defined as “political or military action or measures intended to combat, prevent, or deter terrorism, sometimes with the implication that the methods utilised resemble those of the terrorists” (Kelman, 2012, pp. 12–13). Since the US invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan is actively involved in countering terrorism and extremism. Since 2001, it is now the fourth running government in Pakistan. Each government has had its own approach to fight terrorism. However, Pakistan lacks a National Security Strategy, which perhaps would give a way

forward to policies and information to security analysts and researchers. Pakistan's CT strategies were mostly focused on either war or criminal analogy until 2014. However, one of the major problems with this military approach is that it mainly focuses on countering terrorism rather than preventing it.

To combat terrorism, Musharraf's regime (2001–2008) adopted both military operations and explored non-military options. Musharraf ordered the launch of operation *Al-Mezan* against militants in the tribal areas (Gates and Roy, 2016, pp. 122–128), operation *Zalazala* in South Waziristan (Hasnat, 2011, p. 195), and operation *Sher Dil* in Bajuar agency (Yusuf, 2014, p. 75) while also backing the US drone attacks in the Tribal districts. Furthermore, with the non-military option the government's strategy was to reform *madrassas*, ban the militant organisations, and their activities (Khattak and Mushtaq, 2015, pp. 37–39). However, overall, the Musharraf government was focused on the military options to fight terrorism.

The succeeding government of PPP (2008 – 2012) adopted a 3D – Deterrence, Development and Dialogue – as its CT policy. However, due to the international pressure, particularly from the US, the government conducted some major operations including operation *Rah-e-Haq & Rah-e-Rast* focusing on Swat and Malakand division and operation *Rah-e-Nijat* in South Waziristan (Khan, 2011, p. 130; Shah, 2011, p. 93; Afridi, Yousufi and Khan, 2014, pp. 2001–2003). The government also expanded their approach and conducted dialogue with the TTP Swat and signed a peace deal in May 2008 which did not

last longer than a month (Dawn, 2009b; Wilkinson, 2009). Like Musharraf's government, the PPP government continued backing the US drone attacks in the Tribal districts while opposing it publicly (The Guardian, 2010).

The following government of PML-N (2013 – 2018) was interested in peace talks with militants until December 2014. During this time the militants had continued lethal attacks in the different parts of the country on both soft and hard targets and tried to push the government for their demands which were constantly rejected (Sherazi, 2014). The government launched operation *Zarb-i-Azb* in June 2014 (Geo News, 2014). Along with this, the government strengthened Anti-Terrorism Laws (Asghar, 2014) and took serious stand against the US drone attacks and called it a violation of the international laws (Essa, 2013). The government also issued National Internal Security Plan 2014 – 2018⁵, which was focused on the internal security of the country. However, after the APS Peshawar attack in December 2014, the government changed their strategy and formulated the NAP, which not only focuses on the military option but also include non-military options. The NAP not only covered countering terrorism but, also for the first time, focused on the prevention of the extremism and terrorism, such as choking financing for terrorist and their organisation,

⁵ The plan was more focused on the internal security threats and challenges. Government approach to these threats was dialogues, reconstruction, rehabilitations, reconciliation, reintegration and construction of national narrative against terrorism and extremism (for details see Government of Pakistan, 2014).

taking action against hate speech, extremism, sectarianism, and extremists' literature (Kaphle, 2014).

Until 2014, Pakistan CT strategies were almost exclusively focused on military operation, however, after APS attack Pakistan's approach towards CT has changed. The NAP lists 20-points to be adopted to counter terrorism and extremism, however, it is important to evaluate these measures to assess the extent of success of these policies. But before doing that, in the following section, this study critically explores available literature on CT and extremism strategies of Pakistan.

1.9. Literature Review

The existing literature on the evaluation of the CT policies of Pakistan is very narrow. Available literature is focused on two main aspects, firstly, on the description and illustration of the CT policies and secondly the evaluation of CT policies by using the reduction in the number of terrorist incident as a parameter. For instance, the study of Abbasi, Khatwani and Hussain (2018) focused on the illustration of the military operations. However, it should also be noted that very limited official documents about these military operations have been released to the public so far. Since almost all the operations conducted until 2009 ended with peace agreements, the authors have concluded that these operations were successful. However, the fact that these peace accords were not long-lasting has been ignored. Additionally, the study focused on the general

overview of the CT strategies particularly military operations but did not discuss the implementation and effectiveness of other aspects of the policies.

An example of studies looking at the second aspect of evaluation of CT policies of Pakistan in the existing literature is a study conducted by Rehman *et.al.*, (2017). This study comprehensively evaluated the three dimensions of the CT policies of Pakistan i.e., Peace accords with militants before 2009, military operations, and combination of military operations, particularly operation *Zarb-i-Azb*, and the NAP formulation after the APS attack in December 2014. The authors have concluded that peace accords have no positive effect on the terrorist incidents, and that military operations fuelled the terrorist attacks while the combination of the military operations and NAP showed reduction in the terrorist attacks. Similarly, for evaluation of the CT policies, the authors used the number of terrorist incidents and restoration of government writ in the conflicted areas as an indicator, however, it is believed that the terrorist and extremist ideology still exist in the heads of the people.

The study conducted by Shahid Ahmad Afridi (2016) discussed military operations and civil military relationship in countering terrorism. The author argued that the military had done its job by crashing militant organisations and restoring peace and that it is time that civilian governments and military work together on violent extremism to maintain peace in the society. This study partially indicates that there is much more to be done as the military operations

have been successful in restoring peace and crashing militant organisations, however, the civilian government has not done enough to counter extremism.

Furthermore, some early studies of Jones and Fair (2010) found that the military operations were unsuccessful in holding territory. They also pointed that Pakistan lacked Counter Insurgency (CI) doctrine. Of note, Pakistani officials usually try not to use the term CI. The authors argued that there is lack of political willingness in Pakistan's CT strategies and also claimed that Pakistan is using militant organisations as tool for foreign policy. Similarly, there are few other studies which focus on the CT policies of Pakistan with slightly different perspectives. For instance, a study by Naeem Ahmed (2014), argued that Pakistan's CT policies are ineffective because of three reasons: "Pakistan's strategic interests in the region; skewed civil-military relations; and lack of national consensus on the ownership of the "war on terror"".

Likewise, a study conducted by Marvin G. Weinbaum (2017) point out that the elites and the public have recognised security threat but that there is also room for doubt on the commitment of the government. Interestingly a study by Ayesha Siddiqa (2011) pointed out the same problem of lack of clarity in Islamabad's strategy to counter terrorism and suggested that one of the major reason is that Pakistan's strategy is driven by the military and its "strategic objectives". Furthermore, a study by Shaun Gregory (2007) argued that ISI is supporting the political elite and has "promoted an agenda of Sunni Islamism in Pakistan and of pan-Islamist *Jihad* abroad". Nevertheless, some of these studies

seem outdated now as many developments have happened in the last decade and some studies found a change in the discourse of Pakistan's government towards terrorism (for e.g. Sahill, 2018).

Though the above studies are valuable when it comes to the discussion of Pakistan's CT policies and approaches, they are not sufficient and lack analytical depth to explain the effectiveness of these policies and strategies. For example, merely counting the number of incidences cannot be a good measure of assessing the policy. Likewise, the impacts particularly on society and culture is highly significant to be situated in the literature. For these compelling reasons, the present study is conducted and below elaborates a conceptual and analytical framework.

1.10. Conceptual and Analytical Framework of the Study

Terrorism and counterterrorism have been debated in the literature extensively. The literature has focused on evolution of the concepts as well as their conceptual definitions. In this section I explore the existing literature on key concepts and terms such as Terrorism, Counterterrorism, and Effectiveness. I start with definitions and then explore how these terms have been used in the existing literature. This is then followed by explanation of my chosen model as analytical tool for this study.

1.10.1. Terrorism

Similar to the unceasing discussion about that what makes terrorist (Hardy and Williams, 2011; Blackburn, Davis and Taylor, 2013), there is no agreed and accepted definition of the term terrorism. However, according to Hoffman, the term is explicitly overused and majority of the “people have a vague idea or impression of what terrorism is, but lack a more precise, concrete, and truly explanatory definition of the work”. He further argues that the well-known Oxford English dictionary gives very limited and historical explanation on the term (Hoffman, 2017, p. 23). Whereas the academic literature provides plenty of definitions, there is no clear consensus on it (Schmid and Jongman, 1988; Greene, 2014; Grozdanova, 2014).

One reason for this could be that the term has changed with the passage of time and adopted different aspects of the successive era (Hoffman, 2017, p. 65; Nielsen, 2019, p. 12). Furthermore, some common concepts and social phenomena are not easy to be defined because of the fact that it could be very subjective and different people with different understanding offer diverse set of criteria to assess them (Gallie, 1955, pp. 168–170). In contrast, a study by Alex P. Schmid & Jongman (1988, pp. 5–6) explored 109 definition of terrorism and found 22 different elements. Among these 22 elements the top four recurring elements were Violence & Force (83.5%), Political (65%), Fear (51%) and Threat (47%). These four aspects of terrorism clearly indicate different approaches and perspectives of the scholars. Furthermore, the aim of terrorism

is to terrify the mass and gain political power. According to Echevarria II (2008, pp. 196–218), terrorism could be the continuation of politics. Conclusively and arguably Carl von Clausewitz contends that “War is not an independent phenomenon, but the continuation of politics by different means” (Clausewitz, 1989). This later conceptualization of politics being central to terrorism is close to the understanding of this project and is used to analyse the so-called ‘War on Terror’ in the context of Pakistan.

1.10.2. Extremism

As mentioned earlier, defining some common concepts and phenomena are not an easy subject. Extremism is controversial and has been debated in the literature. Different researchers, scholars, practitioners, politicians and even different extremist groups define it in a variety of ways (Sotlar, 2004, pp. 1–6; Wahab, Azim and Jan, 2020, p. 28). According to Bötticher, the term is “frequently (mis-)used”, is “vague” and “unclear” as there is no legal definition in most countries (Bötticher, 2017, p. 73) whereas those that have established definition of the term, it is problematic (Lowe, 2017). Bötticher proposed a comprehensive definition as:

“Extremism characterises an ideological position embraced by those anti-establishment movements, which understand politics as a struggle for supremacy rather than as peaceful competition between parties with different interests seeking popular support for advancing the common good...where extremists gain state power,

they tend to destroy social diversity... and glorify violence as a conflict resolution mechanism and are opposed to the constitutional state, majority-based democracy, the rule of law and human rights for all” (Bötticher 2017:74).

Some scholars, for example Erroll Southern (2013, p. 4), also believe that “extremism is a primary feature of terrorists’ behaviour” and that it is a belief which is “radical in opinion, especially in political matters ... characterised by intolerance towards opposing interests and divergent opinion and is the primary catalyst and motivation for terrorist behaviour” (Martin, 2010, p. 4). Similar is the case with radicalisation as there is discussion among scholarship that cognitive radicalisation may lead to behavioural radicalisation (Borum, 2011; Horgan, 2011; Neumann, 2013).

There is also discussion among the scholarship that a clear definition of extremism could help countries to identify and monitor extremists. This lack of having a clear definition of extremism can influence the legal outcomes. For example, in the US, Islamist extremists are more likely to face terrorism related charges and penalties compared to the far-right extremists who are involved in crimes of same nature. Furthermore, the UK CT police define environmental activists as extremists, particularly those linked to the Extinction Rebellion movement. Therefore, scholars now put more emphasis on a consensus of the definition of ‘extremists and extremism’ (Yusuf, 2020).

In the recent “Citizens’ Protection (Against Online Harm) Rules, 2020”, the government of Pakistan has defined extremism as, “the violent, vocal or active opposition to fundamental values of the State of Pakistan including the security, integrity or defence of Pakistan, public order, decency or morality, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs” (Government of Pakistan, 2020). But this definition is ambiguous which could “criminalise a legitimate political and religious activities” (Khosa, 2020)

1.10.3. Counterterrorism

Countering terrorism is a complex process and should consist of hard and soft approaches such as intelligence gathering, military operation, investigation, judicial processes and countering the terrorists’ narratives by using all available means to protect a state and its inhabitants (Morag, 2018, pp. 162–176). Looking towards terrorism from different perspectives makes it more difficult to understand counterterrorism (Nielsen, 2019, p. 16), however, it could be simply defined as “the collection of strategies and tactics that seek to thwart terrorism” (Forest, 2015, p. 2) which obviously is too broad in its nature.

Similarly, Schmid *et.al.*, (2011, p. 620) defined CT strategies as, “a proactive effort to prevent, deter, and combat politically motivated violence directed at civilian and non-combatant targets, by the use of a broad spectrum of response measures – law enforcement, political, psychological, social, economic

and (para)military”. This definition is quite comprehensive, but an important notion which should be added to this is that “CT can be more than proactive efforts” (Nielsen, 2019, p. 16). The strategy which often a state adopts towards CT is either proactive or reactive (Sandler and M., 2003, p. 323). In the case of Pakistan, it is mostly reactive in nature. The aim of proactive approach is “to eradicate or at least reduce the capacity” of terrorists organisation (Rehman, Nasir and Shahbaz, 2017). In case of countering extremism, it is important for a state to remain proactive to prevent violent incidents.

1.10.4. Effectiveness

Assessing effectiveness of a policy is an important aspect to learn from past mistakes and avoid them in future as well. Evaluating CT policies is relatively new field and very limited work has been done so far. Lum *et al.*, (2006) have conducted a study and identified almost “20,000 studies on terrorism of which only seven contained information on the effectiveness of CT policies”. Trillions of dollars have been spent on CT measures but so far there is still limited knowledge about its effectiveness (van Um and Pisiou, 2011, pp. 1–2). Likewise, other scholars (Gold, 2005, p. 7; TTSRL, 2007, p. 28; van Dongen, 2011, p. 1; Benmelech, Berrebi and Klor, 2015, p. 1) have questioned the limited role CT plays in academic research (van Um and Pisiou, 2011, p. 2).

Similar to other social concepts and phenomena, there is no generally or widely accepted definition of a framework for CT effectiveness, however,

scholars have used different criteria best suited to their results and by which policies “can be considered effective” (van Dongen, 2011, p. 1; van Um and PISOIU, 2011, p. 3; Nielsen, 2019, p. 11). Therefore, this study used analytical tool (see details below) to evaluate the effectiveness of the policies rather than using any indicators.

1.10.5. Military Effectiveness in CT

In comparison to general military effectiveness studies, research on effectiveness of CT policies is a new field. Comparing the two is not an easy task itself. In CT policies, the aim of military engagement is to assist a country’s government in maintaining law and order, while in traditional military intervention or waging war military engagement only aims to take control of others’ country or territory (Nielsen, 2019, p. 13). However, the two – military intervention/waging war and counterterrorism – can be compared especially after the global WoT and the use of military personnel and equipment such as use of drones on foreign grounds (Nielsen, 2019, p. 13). Some authors (for example Duyvesteyn, 2008) believes that the use of military in CT operations are not contributing to countering terrorism rather it makes things worse. However, in case of Pakistan, studies have found that military operations were successful, at least for short-term.

1.10.6. Analytical Tool – Eric Van Um & Daniela PISOIU’s Model of Effectiveness

In order to have a clear concept of the effectiveness of the CT studies, this thesis adopts the model developed by Eric Van Um & Daniela PISOIU (2015). The concept is basically inspired from the theory of decision-making developed by Easton (1965) with slight variation from Young (2001) which differentiates between “output, outcome and impact of policy” (Um and PISOIU, 2015, p. 235). It can be divided into three main components i.e., *Output effectiveness*, *Outcome effectiveness*, and *Impact effectiveness*.

“Output effectiveness refers to the implementation of regulations, policy instruments or compliance mechanisms”, and it completely depends on the attitude or behaviour of lawmakers/policymakers and the agencies who are responsible for their implementation. In relation to the behaviour of the officials *“the effectiveness of the adopted measures is assessed”*. *Outcome effectiveness* focuses on the directly measurable effects that the laws/policies/regulations have on the real life. So, basically *Outcome effectiveness* not only depend on the behaviours of executors of these policies, but it *“also depends on the behaviour of the targeted groups in relation to the short-term objectives”* of the laws/policies/regulations. *Impact effectiveness* solely depends on the attitudes of the targeted groups *“in relation to the long-term objective of the CT policy”,* for instance *“reducing or stopping terrorism”*. The result of the measures taken will

no longer dependent on the policymakers or its executors but rather the response of the targeted audience of the policy (Um and Pisoiu, 2015, pp. 229–245).

Consider example of terrorists financing as illustrated in Figure 1 below. Let us assume that a bill has been passed into legislation which allows freezing assets of suspected terrorists. This legislation would be considered as evidence of the *Output effectiveness* in this model as it is based on the behaviour of legislators and policymakers. The *Outcome effectiveness* is twofold in nature: firstly, the short-term goals of freezing terrorists' assets and secondly, the long-term goal of the bill is choking terrorists' resources. This not only depend on the behaviour of the executors or policy implementation but also on the attitudes of the targeted group(s) towards finding alternative for their activities. The *Impact effectiveness* would be the result of the bill passed if it has reduced or ended terrorist activities (Um and Pisoiu, 2015, p. 236).

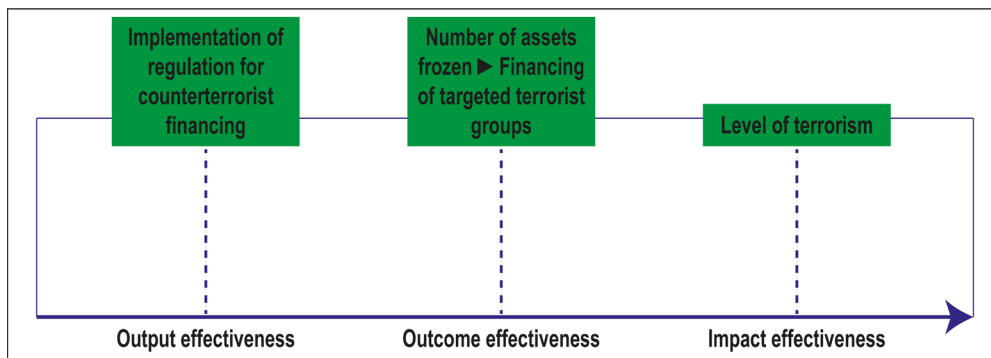


Figure 1. Concept of CT effectiveness: the example of freezing terrorist assets (Um and Pisoiu, 2015)

1.11. Research Design and Methods

The methodology of this study is qualitative in nature. During this research work both primary and secondary sources were consulted to explore the research objectives. This study proceeds with asking a legitimate research question: *to what extent has the Nation Action Plan been effective in countering terrorism and preventing extremism?* This question is linked to the three sub questions i.e. (1). *To what extent has the National Action Plan addressed terrorism and extremism?* (2). *To what extent has the National Action Plan been implemented?* And (3). *What are the consequences of the National action plan, if any?* These sub questions fit very well with my chosen model discussed above which will guide further analysis in this dissertation. To investigate these questions, interviews were used as a primary source, which is accompanied by different secondary sources.

As interviews are one of the major and convenient tools of data collection in qualitative research (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995, p. 1; King, 2004, p. 11), all primary data was collected through interviews. These interviews were semi-structured in nature. The interview questions were shuffled according to the discussion during the interview. The questions were direct and designed to trigger discussion which provided more space for the interviewees to speak about their experiences, knowledge, and share information. Story telling was used by Edwards (1996), which was found useful by Muhammad Ayub Jan (2010). I took that experience into consideration and found it very helpful

especially while interviewing people from the Tribal districts. They shared their experiences and the way they lived before and after the military operations. This enabled me to identify more themes which are discussed in Chapter three of this dissertation. For secondary data, this thesis consulted books, research papers, reports, PhD and masters' dissertations, newspaper reports, think-tank reports and government documents etc.

In total 30 interviews were conducted during 1st March – 30th April 2021 period. The interview respondents were selected non-randomly and ranged from policymakers, government officials, scholars, practitioners, journalists, and human rights activists, as well as some university students (from Tribal districts)⁶. These participants were selected due to their insider or expert knowledge relevant to the topic of this study. As securing access to research participants is a strategic process (Atkinson and Hammersley, 2007, p. 46; Azim, 2019, p. 35), I used my personal and professional connections as a gatekeeper to reach out as many participants as was practically possible under the circumstances (Krause *et al.*, 2021, p. 267). The selected participants were initially contacted by email or telephone directly, or by using gatekeepers to introduce myself and my research work. Subsequently, participants were sent a Plain Language Statement of the study and Consent Form approved by the Ethics

⁶ A complete list of the interviewees can be found in appendix B

Committee of the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Glasgow. All interviews were conducted using online meeting tools (Zoom, Skype, etc.), and no face-to-face meetings were held as part of this research work.

Using gatekeepers allowed me to gain trust of the interviewees. Once trust-based relationships were established, it was then easy to acquire the consent of the participants for the study. Majority of the participants consented to recording the virtual meeting conversations except three, who agreed to participate on the condition of the meeting not being recorded. In these instances, I took written notes during the meeting as per mutual agreement. As most of the participants used mobile phones to join interview meetings and had no access to a laptop or a computer to return the signed consent form, oral consent was obtained before starting recording the meeting. They were also given time to ask questions, raise concerns, or even make comments if they had any. The duration of the meetings varied, some lasted for half an hour while others for up to seventy minutes. However, the average length of meeting was forty-nine minutes. The languages used during the meetings were Pashtu, Urdu, and English. The participants were allowed to choose their preferred language. Similarly, throughout the study pseudonyms names for the participants have been used to ensure anonymity and protect privacy of the study participants.

After the data collection, I divided the 20-points of National Action Plan into eight akin themes. These themes were then critically evaluated by applying

the model I adopted for this study. During my data collection process, I came to know an important aspect of the side effects of the Nation Action Plan. These side effects were very broad in nature i.e., positive and negative side effects. So, to investigate these themes I interviewed local inhabitants from the region who suffered first from terrorism and then from the military operations conducted under the umbrella of the NAP. These findings are discussed in more detail in Chapter three of this dissertation.

Nevertheless, there are certain limitations to the methodology. First and foremost, the travel restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, prevented me from conducting some ethnographic observations of the field. Secondly, Pakistan is not yet a fully modernised and digitalized country and there are still certain parts of the country, particularly the Tribal districts, where people have no access to the internet. Therefore, it was really hard to reach some potential participants and to access most of the official documents which are not available on the internet either. Traveling to Pakistan and accessing government documents and archive materials would have significantly enhanced findings of this thesis. There were also problems in reaching out to some potential participants whose insight would have been useful. Finally, some experts in the field either did not respond to interview request or refused to take part in the study. I believe participation of these individuals would have provided some more valuable insights on issues investigated in this study.

1.12. Research Plan

This dissertation is divided into 3 chapters. Chapter 1, ‘Introduction’, introduces the study by explaining its background, highlights the objectives and significance of the study, discusses the existing literature, and conceptual, analytical, and methodological approaches used in the study. It also outlines this research briefly. Chapter 2, ‘A Critical Assessment of Pakistan’s National Action Plan’, critically evaluates the NAP and highlights the extent to which the plan has been implemented. Chapter 3, ‘Socio-Cultural and Political Transformation in Tribal districts’, highlights the side effects of CT policies, both positive and negative, on the inhabitants of the Tribal districts – the region worst hit by militancy. This is then followed by ‘Conclusion’ of the research and some policy recommendations.

2. CHAPTER II: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF PAKISTAN'S NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

2.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, the evolution of terrorism, extremism and CT policies of Pakistan was briefly discussed. A shift in Pakistan's CT policy approach from solely military action to a combination of military and non-military approach for countering terrorism and extremism was also mentioned. This section of the thesis critically investigates the NAP with a particular focus on the broader question: To what extent has the NAP addressed and countered terrorism and extremism? The purpose of this section of the thesis is to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan. Therefore, this section of the thesis is divided into three subsections based on the analytical tool adopted for this study – the Eric Van Um & Daniela PISOIU's Model of Effectiveness – *Output effectiveness*, *Outcome effectiveness* and *Impact effectiveness* which has been discussed in the previous chapter in detail⁷.

It is argued that Pakistan's National Action Plan has partially achieved its goals however, one should be cautious in saying that the plan is completely effective and has accomplished its objectives. The military aspect or the hard measures of the plan were executed immediately after the plan was formulated while on the other hand, soft measures of the plan still need a lot of efforts to be

⁷ For details, see page 19 of this dissertation.

implemented and to achieve the desired goals. As a result, the military operations in the country have achieved and established government's writ and decreased terrorist incidents in different parts of the country particularly in the Tribal districts, but extremism or extremist ideology still occupies some space in the heads of the people.

This section of the thesis is structured as follow. First, as an example of the *Output effectiveness*, I give a general overview of the NAP. In this subsection the question explored is, *what has been done by the policymakers to address the issue of terrorism, extremism, and insecurity?* In the second subsection, *Outcome effectiveness*, I discuss the extent to which the plan has been implemented. And in the third subsection I discuss *Impact effectiveness* by exploring the impacts of the plan. This is then followed by a brief conclusion.

2.2. Output Effectiveness – An Overview of National Action

Plan

It has now been over five years since NAP, a reactionary 20-points agenda after the massacre of the APS attack, was formulated. This plan is also considered one of the most comprehensive plans as it not only includes countering terrorism & extremism by using military means, but also included non-military option for countering and preventing terrorism & extremism. However, five years after its formulation there are still questions about the success and effectiveness of the plan. Also, it has not been clear and easy to

argue whether this plan was successfully implemented or not, but the current security situation of the country indicates that some work has been done on the implementation of the plan. It is argued that the plan is partially effective, particularly the hard measures which resulted in the establishment of government writ in different parts of the country. However, very limited work has been done so far on the soft measure to counter terrorism and extremism. Below I give a brief overview of the twenty-points of the NAP and critically evaluate the steps that have so far been taken to implement the plan.

Though the plan got public attention but on the intellectual level it was faced with certain critiques and is usually described as a “*to do list*”(Murad, 2021) rather than a solid plan. This ‘to do list’ is like a reminder to the policymakers of what next needs to be done. For the sake of this thesis, I divided the twenty points agenda into eight identical themes below. A complete list of 20-points of the NAP action can be found in appendix A.

1. Execution of those convicted of terrorist & establishment of military courts
2. Ending militants’ outfits, their re-emergence & disrupting their communication networks.
3. Countering extremists’ propaganda, their glorification, & streamlining religious schools.
4. Protection of religious minorities & dealing with religious terrorists.

5. Strengthening NACTA, choking terrorists' financing & establishing anti-terrorism force.
6. Tribal districts & judicial reforms & registration of Afghan refugees.
7. Preventing abuse of internet and social media websites.
8. Concluding Karachi's operation, zero tolerance for militancy in Punjab, & empowering Baluchistan's government for political reconciliation.

The NAP begun from the execution of the convicted terrorist, however, it is pertinent to mention that since 2008, capital punishment had been abolished and no one was hanged until December 2014 in Pakistan (Human Rights Watch, 2008). But with the announcement of the NAP, the ban on capital punishment was lifted, and death penalty resumed (Manan, 2014; BBC News, 2015). The military courts were established for two years after the controversial 21st amendment in the 1973 constitution of Pakistan. The establishment of military courts was difficult for the policymakers while certain practitioners of law have raised question about it too (Dawn, 2015; Ghumman, 2015; HRCP, 2015, p. 34). Though the establishment of the military court was very much controversial and faced with criticism, it was one of an *Outputs* of the policymakers (A. Shah, 2021). It is interesting that measures related to the Pakistani military i.e., establishment of military courts and conducting military operations were immediately enabled by the policymakers. This immediate formulation of the measures has contributed to an anti-military narrative in the country.

To end militant outfits, to ban terrorist organisations/groups, their members, and facilitators and to prevent their re-emergence and disrupt their communication networks, the existing institutions were mobilised and to some extent empowered (e.g., NACTA empowerment under NAP). As an effort, to dismantle the communication system, particularly the one through mobile phones, mostly unregistered or mis-registered, the government asked citizens for the registration of the mobile phone SIM cards. A mechanism was set up through which each citizen was allowed to register up to five SIM cards using their Computerised Nation Identity Card while any remaining unregistered SIM cards were blocked by Pakistan Telecommunication Authority. Additionally, the government authorised the law enforcement agencies to stop and search, conduct intelligence-based operations, arrest suspects without any warrant from court in different parts of the country (Raza, 2021).

After the formulation of NAP, the policymakers launched *Paigham-e-Pakistan* (The Message of Pakistan) in 2018 – a unanimous document prepared with the help of religious scholars from all major sects, academic scholars, Council of Islamic Ideology of Pakistan, and Higher Education Commission of Pakistan – which focuses on collective reflection of the country. This initiative includes multiple programs such as, *Aman* [peace] programs of religious scholars, *Naujawan* [youth] of Pakistan, *Dukhtaran* [daughters] of Pakistan. The aim of this initiative is to bring all religions to a common platform so that they can work together and counter extremism to achieve peace in the society

(Islamic Research Institute, IIUI, 2018). Similarly, NACTA, produced countering extremism policy guidelines in 2018 which give details about drivers of extremism, national policy guidelines on the “rule of law”, “media and citizens engagement”, “educational reforms”, and “promotion of culture”(NACTA, 2018). However, it has not been adopted to reduce the level of violence and intolerance in the society, while on contrary, intolerance has been increasing every day.

Furthermore, in 2015 the government issued a code of conduct under the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority Act 2007, which replaced the code of conduct of 2009. This code gives fundamental principle which prohibits the electronic media from airing content of hatred based on religion, race, colour, sect, gender etc. It also gives guidelines on the coverage of incidents of violence, crime, religious tolerance and harmony and usage of decent language (Government of Pakistan, 2015). One of the private TV anchor person commented on this as: “*We are strictly advised to give very limited screen time to the terrorists’ and extremists’ activities/narratives*” (Ahmad, 2021). The aim of the code of conduct is to the prevent glorification and propagation of extremism and hate in the country.

Moreover, regulation of *madrassas* and protection of religious minorities were and still are one of the major challenges to Pakistan. The regulation of *madrassas* (religious schools) first started after the September 11 attacks following the promulgation of Pakistan *madrassas* education boards, with

which the *madrassas* were supposed to register and be modernised (Candland and Hathaway, 2005, pp. 151–165). However, to date very few of *madrassas* have been modernised (Israr, 2015; Alam, 2021). After NAP, steps were taken towards regulation of *madrassas* particularly their registration and monitoring external funding and implementation of curriculum reform (Abrar, 2015; Mukhtar, 2015). To tackle the issue of freedom of religion and protection of religious minorities⁸ in the country, the NAP aimed to take ‘practical’ steps. To this end, few legal structures on provincial levels such as Sindh Hindu Marriage Act, 2016, Hindu Marriage Act, 2017 (for all provinces), Sindh Hindu Marriage Act, 2018 (amendment in the 2016 Act), and Punjab Sikh Anand Karaj Marriage Act, 2018 have been passed.

The NAP also called for strengthening NACTA, the coordination and research body for anti-terrorism. NACTA was created through an ordinance in 2009 and later in 2013 it was ratified through a parliamentary Act (Hussain, 2012). NACTA was given some attention after the NAP, for instance, National Task Force on countering financing of terrorism was established while the rest of the agencies were also mobilised to counter and choke terrorists’ financings.

⁸ In Pakistan religion minorities make only four percent of the total population. For census in 2017, Hindu, Christians, Ahmadis* and the scheduled castes are counted as religious minorities, while smaller minorities are collectively termed as “others”. As for census of 2017, 96.2 percent of population of Pakistan are Muslims – both Suni and Shia – (Shias make up 15 to 20 percent of total population (for details see Rieck, 2016)), 1.6 percent are Hindu, 1.59 percent are Christians 0.25 percent are scheduled castes, 0.22 percent are Ahmadis and 0.07 percent are other minorities (For details see, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017).

*Ahmadis are considered as non-Muslims under the constitution of Pakistan (for details see definition section of the constitution of Pakistan. Government of Pakistan, 1973)

The National Task Force work along with 28 other stakeholders including provincial CT departments, Home Departments, Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), State Bank of Pakistan and different ministries etc (NACTA, 2019). Similarly, after the NAP specialised Counter Terrorism Forces (CTF) were established to strengthen the existing forces in all four provinces. The central objectives of NACTA are to synchronise and monitor the state's efforts against terrorism and to formulate comprehensive counterterrorism strategies and put forward their suggestions to government for implementation (Ahmad, 2016).

Tribal districts reforms, judicial reforms in the country and the registration of Afghan refugees were big challenges to the government. Tribal districts arguably being the “most volatile region in the world”(Ali, 2018a, p. 1), were kept under the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) until May 2018, which is considered as “Black Law” (Shah, 2014). The NAP proclaimed for reforms in these districts and the return of the Internally Displaced People (IDPs) to their homes as soon as possible. The immediate focus was on the repatriation of IDPs to their homes. In 2015, a reform committee was established which presented their findings, gave several recommendations on development, budget, and other administrative issues to the parliament. These recommendations were approved by Prime Minister in 2017, however, it took over three year to merge FATA with the KP province after the 25th constitutional amendment in 2018 (Wasim, 2018). The merger of Tribal districts gave 23 more seats to KP

provincial assembly which will increase the role of these districts in provincial matters and will echo their voice at federal level (Bhutto, 2018). The federal government promised Rs. 110 billion for 2018 and similar amount for the following year for development programs. While to register Afghan refugees National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) was tasked to register them and also refugees were asked for their voluntary return to Afghanistan (Khattak, 2015, p. 148). Thus, a record number (1,554,910) of refugees were registered in year 2015.

On another aspect, NAP called for the prevention of internet and social media abuse. The National Response Centre for Cyber Crime wing of the FIA is responsible for regulating and dealing with issues related to internet and social media. Similarly, Pakistan's parliament recently passed "Citizens Protection (Against Online Harm) Rules, 2020" which make social media company obliged "with respect to blocking and removal of unlawful online content", "establishment of national coordinator" and "Provision of information by social media company" to the government (Government of Pakistan, 2020).

The NAP also called for a solid and meaningful conclusion to the then ongoing Rangers⁹ led operation in Karachi which started in September 2013. The plan also focused on militancy in Punjab and asked zero tolerate to militancy in Punjab. Similarly, to deal with the feeling of deprivation of

⁹ Rangers are Pakistan's paramilitary force work under the Interior Secretary of Pakistan

separatist Baluch of the Baluchistan province, the plan included that the federal government would empower Baluchistan's government for political reconciliation.

Though the plan is quite exhaustive, there are still several shortcomings of NAP. Firstly, the policy does not give any detailed guidelines for any of its twenty-point agenda. Military courts were established but there are no details for the procedures of the court rulings and because of this several concerns were raised by some policymakers, lawyers, and human rights activists and some of these concerns proved right in the following years as the military court were give extension and their decision were suspended by high court. Secondly, the policy is very general and includes several important issues such as legal and constitutional reforms, strengthening institutions, empowerment of governments and dealing with terrorism and extremism. However, it does not include any specific guidelines for its implementation and monitoring. Thirdly, the policy is itself very generic and did not take into consideration any cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity of the country. KP, the province most affected by terrorism, and the Tribal districts which were home to terrorists after the declaration of the so-called "WoT" in Afghanistan, are culturally very different to the rest of the country. The policy did not give any guidance on how to address these cultural sensitivities and as a result a sense of deprivation, hatred, and anger can be found in the inhabitants of the region. These negative feelings and anger have elicited themselves in the form of Pashtun *Tahfiz* [Protection]

Movement (PTM). An academic expert in the field has suggested that “*there should be specific policy for different regions, culture and ethnicity under the broad umbrella of national policy*” (Murad, 2021). Finally, the policy does not provide any information on monitoring and implementation mechanism which are important aspects of any policy for assessing its success. Nevertheless, there are certain *Outcome effectiveness* of the policy which will be discussed in the following section.

2.3. Outcome Effectiveness – Implementation of NAP

The *Outcome effectiveness* is the direct measurable effect of the policy on real life. It depends not only on the approach of the executive but also of the targeted audience in relation to short term objectives. As mentioned above, the policy itself is an example of the *Output effectiveness* which has been discussed. In the following section I will discuss the *Outcome effectiveness* i.e., *to what extent has the policy been implemented?*

2.3.1. Execution of Convicted Terrorists & Establishment of Military Courts

The military courts were established soon after the announcement of NAP. By the end of 2019, these courts had convicted 617 suspected terrorists, out of which 346 have been executed while 271 were given prison sentences of different durations. However, majority of these cases were not related to

terrorism but were criminal charges (HRCP, 2015, p. 32). In later years, however, some concerns were raised by practitioners, lawyers, and lawmakers which proved right as the duration of the special courts were extended for two more years. Some of the decisions of these military courts were challenged in upper courts and Peshawar High Court even suspended military courts' decisions by giving 426-page long and detailed judgements (Dawn, 2017b; Omer, 2017; Shah, 2018a, 2018b; W. A. Shah, 2020a, 2020b; Iqbal, 2020). Obaid Aslam, an interviewee during my data collection, and a high court lawyer commented on military courts as:

“Military courts were extremely controversial. No one knows what happened in these courts and what procedures were adopted for trials. The only source of information was ISPR¹⁰ and very limited information was publicly available about the entire process within these courts. One could obviously say that these courts were a success as they executed hundreds of militants even though it violated human rights. But similar to the support of US citizens for the “WoT” after the 9/11 attacks, the APS attack in Peshawar helped bring the nation to the same page” (Aslam, 2021).

The establishment of the courts and the execution of the convicted terrorist part of the NAP was implemented successfully but one cannot claim that its implementation and execution was effective because of four important reasons. Firstly, majority of the executed cases were not related to terrorism.

¹⁰ Inter-Services Public Relations is Pakistan Army's media and public relations wing

Secondly, the decisions of military courts were challenged in other courts while later their decisions were overturned by higher civil courts as well. Thirdly, these courts violated human and constitutional rights by not allowing the accused a chance to fair trials. And finally, it is also not clear that these executions have any impact on the level of terrorism.

2.3.2. Ending Militants' Outfits, their Re-Emergence & Disrupting their Communication Networks

The measures adopted as part of the NAP, including Operation *Raddul Fasaad*, put pressure on banned terrorist organisations/groups and their members and facilitator by convicting and executing them. The number of banned organisations/groups until April 2021 was 79, among which 42 are religiously motivated (NACTA, 2021). The level of terrorist incidents fell from 1569 in 2014 to 950 in 2015 (as shown in figure 2 below) and further in following years after the NAP was announced.

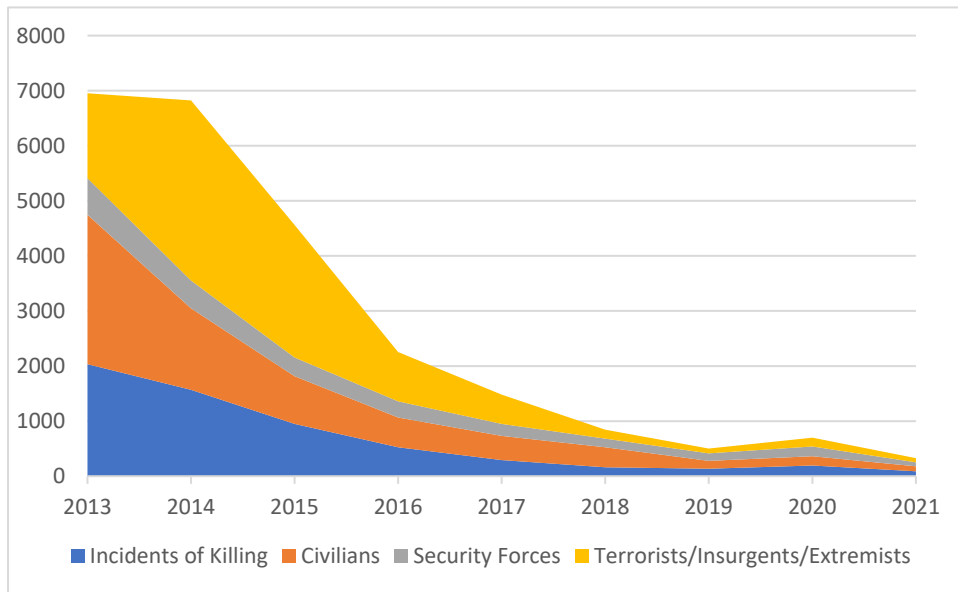


Figure 2 Terrorist Incidents and number of casualties in the period Jan 2013 - May 2021.

Source: <https://www.satp.org/datasheet-terrorist-attack/fatalities/pakistan>

To dismantle the terrorists communication, the government blocked around 98.3 million illegal mobile phone SIM cards and dozens of website (The News, 2016). In the Tribal districts Operation *Raddul Fasaad* was conducted. As a result, five millions of inhabitants were displaced who later on returned to their homes (Government of Pakistan, no date, p. 8). The government writ has been established in the area which was previously known as “no go areas” (Orakzi, 2009, p. 32). The government claimed this operation as success and that it had “broken the backbone of TTP” (Dawn, 2017a), however, this claim is constantly challenged by the PTM leaders and members (Ullah, 2021). The number of terrorists incidents decreased in the country, however, the locals fear that rogue elements are appearing again. These elements are not armed yet, but they could get strength with the passage of time if it not tackled in a timely

manner. Ahmad described a situation of a wedding ceremony in the Tribal districts as:

“It was my cousin’s wedding, and we arranged a music program to celebrate this event. Some people came to *Hujra* [guest house] and threaten us because of playing loud music. Some of us tried to resist this but our elders stopped us perhaps they knew what these people could do and resisting could have led to a fight which our elders do not want, at least not in a wedding ceremony” (A. Khan, 2021).

The government has used a variety of tactics, for instance, stop and search, arrests, and conducting intelligence-based operations. This has resulted in arrest of hundreds of thousands of individuals in an effort to eradicate members of banned organisations/groups (PIPS, 2020, p. 20). The federal government has recently proscribed 88 terrorist organisation in compliance with a list issued by the United Nations Security Council (The News, 2020c). In April this year [2021], government banned *Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan* (TLP), a political party with extremist views. Members of TLP did a sit-in protest across the country when police arrested their leader in Lahore (Hashim, 2021a; Janjua, 2021). Among other drivers, extremist ideology present in the country can act as fertile soil for rogue elements to nourish. Tackling extremist ideology was included in the NAP which is discussed below.

2.3.3. Countering Extremist Propaganda, their Glorification, & Streamlining Religious Schools

To prevent extremism, the NAP called for the countering of extremist propaganda, their glorification on media and the streamlining of the religious institutions. The NAP has especially focused on both hard and soft approaches to counter extremism. The *Paigham-e-Pakistan* program was initiated which is more focused in Punjab and Sindh provinces of Pakistan. The problem of extremism is certainly more entrenched in these provinces. However, the Tribal districts, on the other hand, are still deprived of the utility of such programs for countering extremism which is, in part, due to a very limited role of the civil government in the region. Under the sphere of this project, the authorities arrange dialogues/activities among believers of different religions, but unfortunately there is no data available on the outcome of the project.

Similarly, to counter hate speech, authorities took several initiatives. A report issued by NACTA, demonstrated that thousands of cases have been registered and a number of arrests have been made over hate speech and hateful material (The News, 2016). Ministry of Interior took initiative in March 2017 and blocked 937 URLs and 10 websites of banned terrorist organisations. Along with this, under the Sound System Ordinance 2015, in 2017, a total of 17,562 cases were registered for using loudspeakers for hate speech, and 19,289 person were arrested and thousands of equipment were seized (Ahmed, 2016; Khattak,

2016; Shakil, 2017). However, these reports are mostly outdated and no recent is available. Political leaders from the opposition, particularly Bilawal Bhutto Zardari demanded and blame the government for the lack of implementation of the NAP (Alam, 2019; The Express Tribune, 2020; The News, 2020a; I. Hussain, 2021). Similarly, hate speech and extremist propaganda literature, are still circulating even in universities in the capital of the country (Ahmed and Jafri, 2020; Nawaz, 2021). Unfortunately, law enforcement agencies mostly respond in reaction to events rather than acting proactively.

Similarly, regulation of religious *madrassas* was part of the NAP. When the law enforcement agencies started investigation against the unregistered *madrassas* and their link to terrorist organisations, the *madrassas* consortium, *Ittehad Tanzeemat-e-Madaaris Pakistan*, expressed their concerns on the clause of the NAP related to the *madrassas* reforms by arguing that a link between militancy and religion is erroneous (PIPS, 2020, p. 39). However, the government has so far managed to shut down 250 *madrassas* under NAP (Ahmed, 2016) and plans to bring 30,000 *madrassas* under government control (Sayeed, 2019). Nonetheless, unfortunately, there is no recent reliable data from independent or government sources which could give us more insights into the effectiveness of the policy and issues around it. One former policymaker referenced to the religious *madrassas* and the reservations of religious political parties on the NAP and said:

“Religious political parties have interests in the *madrassas* as these *madrassas* are one of the main supports and vote bank for them. These political parties misuse religion for their political interests. The recent TLP violent protest is one example of this when most of the religious political parties supported the cause of TLP”¹¹ (R. Shah, 2021).

In contrast, in academia scholars believe that connecting the two, extremism and *madrassas*, is not right and this is one of the most common argument. Muhammad Murad commented on the argument as: “*Connecting extremism and madrassas is very common in the journalistic reports but in reality, this is not case. It is just their [the media] perceptions, and their [the media] reports are not research based*” (Murad, 2021). However, Murad might be ignoring the fact that *madrassas* played a role to create *mujahideen* for the Cold War, while more recently the violent protest of TLP is an example of *madrassas*’ role in extremism (Dawn, 2021h, 2021b; France 24, 2021). Furthermore, apart from registration there is no strong check and balance on the registered *madrassas*. Except for a few famous and big *madrassas*, there is no monitoring of *madrassas* particularly their financing and curriculum and most *madrassas*, especially in the rural areas, are almost free to preach whatever they want. As a result, extremism and widespread extremist propaganda in the

¹¹ (TLP had announced a protest after their leader was arrested in Lahore. The protest became violent in which several police died and injured. The religious political parties announced a sit-in and nationwide strike. For details see D. com | J. Hussain, 2021).

country, religious minorities are at risk. Therefore, to protect religious minorities the NAP added their protection to the list which is discussed next.

2.3.4. Protection of Religious Minorities & Dealing with Religious Terrorists

The plan took notice of the issue of protection of religious minorities and dealing with religious terrorism. On provincial level several laws/acts and bills have been passed by the policymakers. However, these measures only deal with civil matters of religious minorities and do not necessarily protect religious minorities from religion-based terrorism. According to a media report, around 1,000 girls are forcibly converted to Islam each year (Gannon, 2020), the claim rejected by the government by saying it is “rubbish and baseless”, and that there is no “empirical evidence” of the report (Sajid, 2020). However, there is no data available which highlights the matter in detail, nonetheless, religious minorities demand for an anti-force conversion law. In a seminar held in Karachi, minorities’ lawmakers, human rights activists raised questions on pending status of a law on the forced conversion (Kumar, 2021; UCA News, 2021).

Similarly, the Hazara minority in Baluchistan region is continuously targeted by terrorists. Recently, earlier this year killing of Hazara (Shias) Baluchistan demonstrates the threat to religious minorities. After this terrorist incident, thousands of Hazara started protest (Kakar, 2019b; Dawn, 2021f; Notezai, 2021; Shahid, 2021; Yousafzai, 2021) Prime Minister called them to

refrain from “blackmailing the premier”(Dawn, 2021d). In protecting religious minorities, the plan has failed which is demonstrated by the continuous targeting of minorities by terrorist organisations.

2.3.5. Strengthening NACTA, Choking Terrorists’ Financing & Establishing Anti-Terrorism Force

The NAP also aimed to strengthen NACTA. According to the NACTA annual report 2019, the body is focused on multiple areas which includes countering extremism and terrorism, countering terrorists’ financing and working on building capabilities of the Counter Terrorism Department. For example, in year 2019, NACTA banned 444 individuals and froze 5,551 bank accounts (NACTA, 2019). The institution also regularly publishes a research journal, annual reports and contributes to the development of CT strategies. Before the NACTA, there was a huge gap between academia and policymakers. This gap has reduced to some extent as NACTA arranges capacity building trainings, seminars, and conferences to bring academia and policymakers to a platform. NACTA were given the mandate of data collection/information/intelligence and of dismantling the data in relevant stakeholders to deal with security issue. However, the institute has been under funded compared to its demands and is faced with issues of resources, while majority of the budget is consumed by the Joint Intelligence Directorate of NACTA (Asad, 2016; Rana, 2017; Dawn, 2018; Tanoli, 2018). Similarly, “the

[NACTA's] board of governors is composed of high and busy officials which make it difficult to attend or participate in the quarterly meetings in a year” (Warich, 2021).

The NAP also called for establishing a specialised Counter Terrorism Force (CTF). Since the endorsement of NAP, four provinces of Pakistan independently took several steps towards establishing a specialised CTF while some also maintained the existing anti-terrorism units (Zahid, 2016). In Punjab province two anti-terrorism forces, the Elite police (1997) and Counterterrorism force (2014), were functional, however after NAP, the number of personnel in these forces were increased (The Express Tribune, 2014). Similarly, the Sindh province had its own “Special Security Unit” established in 2010. Interestingly, despite the presence of the “Special Security Unit” which is supposedly highly trained against organised crime, Rangers have been conducting operations in Karachi for years, which is a question mark on the functionality of the “Special Security Unit”. The CTF of KP was established in 2013 with an initial strength of 2,400 police officers. They are not only highly trained in counter terrorism operations but also their mandate allows them to “operate as intelligence-gathering agency” (PIPS, 2020, p. 29). The Anti-Terrorist Force is similar unit in Baluchistan that conducts operations against militants but unlike other province no special training has been provided to this unit and its officers have either been trained in Islamabad's or Lahore's training schools (PIPS, 2020, p. 29).

2.3.6. Tribal Districts & Judicial Reforms & Registration of Afghan Refugees

After the establishment of government writ in late 2015 in Tribal districts, the IDPs were returned to their home. They were given compensation of up to a maximum of Rs. 450,000 (\$6000) for damage to their houses during the military operation. This amount of money was not sufficient to build a house in which at least 10-15 people live. Additionally, this compensation was not given to everyone and those who were given this support, it was with long delays. Khuram Ejaz, an activist from the region described it as:

“The government promised to conduct survey in four weeks. Then the government was supposed to give compensation to locals for their damages, however, the survey was not conducted on time. People who returned to their villages were living in terrible conditions, surrounding themselves with fabrics for home *Pardah* [seclusion]. There were no basic facilities while some influential people were given the compensation quickly as compared to the rest” (Ejaz, 2021).

Similarly, the budget which was allocated for the development programs of the Tribal districts has actually not been spent on the development of the region – a matter very much questioned by the locals (Farooq, 2020). It was expected that merger of the Tribal districts with the KP province would solve the problems of the region, however, the local community realised that nothing has changed and if anything, their problems have increased further (N. Khan,

2021). There is need to do more against “poverty, hunger, terrorism and illiteracy” (Ali, Ansari and Firdous, 2020, p. 230). Similar concerns were expressed by several participants of this study. The merger process was supposed to be completed in five years with this period being considered as transition period but the process is running behind schedule which is believed to be due to “weak state response to security challenges in KP province” (PIPS, 2019, p. 12). Likewise, very limited work has been done so far on the development and rebuilding of the educational, healthcare, and other infrastructure in the area. During the military operation, around 600 schools were partially damaged or destroyed. However, six year after the operations only 79 new schools have been established (PIPS, 2020, pp. 55–56).

Moreover, NAP also listed the reforming of judicial system which has bad reputation in public¹² and its extension to Tribal districts. However, nothing has been done so far for judicial reformation. According to Frederick Rawski, Asia Director of International Commission of Jurists, “the lapse of the jurisdiction of military courts over civilians is a step in the right direction, but unsurprisingly – even four years after military courts were empowered to try civilians – there is no sign of the promised reforms to strengthen the ordinary criminal justice system to effectively and fairly handle terrorism-related cases” (ICJ, 2019). After the merger of Tribal districts with KP, the judicial system has been

¹² The number of pending cases is over two million. Among these millions 44,500 cases are pending in Supreme Court of Pakistan only (for details see Dawn, 2020; The News, 2020b)

extended to these districts, but to date no infrastructure has been developed (Muhammad, 2021). The Federal Levies, now KP police, in the region are not well trained and even serving police are unable to register First Information Report (FIR). On the other hand, there is a common narrative in the government that overnight change is not possible, and that it will take time to reform the existing system. Nevertheless, a counter argument is that it has now been over five years of the NAP and there is almost no evidence of any initiatives for judicial reforms while the number of pending cases the country is increasing every following year.

For decades Afghan refugees have been living in Pakistan, but number of their registration is not crystal clear as some of them are register while others are not. The NAP planned for the registration of the Afghan refugees and asked the NADRA to register the refugees, however, the process was slow and during that timeframe Pakistani state recommended for the refugees' voluntary return to Afghanistan (Khattak, 2015, p. 148) The law enforcement agencies also started crackdown on illegal and unregistered refugees in which thousands of refugees were arrested (Ali, 2016), and in 2016, about 614,411 refugees returned to Afghanistan (Bjelica, 2016). However, there is no national refugees law in Pakistan which would be a more efficient way of dealing with refugees

(Khan, 2020, p. 52). The figure 3 below shows the number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan from 2014 to March 2020 period.

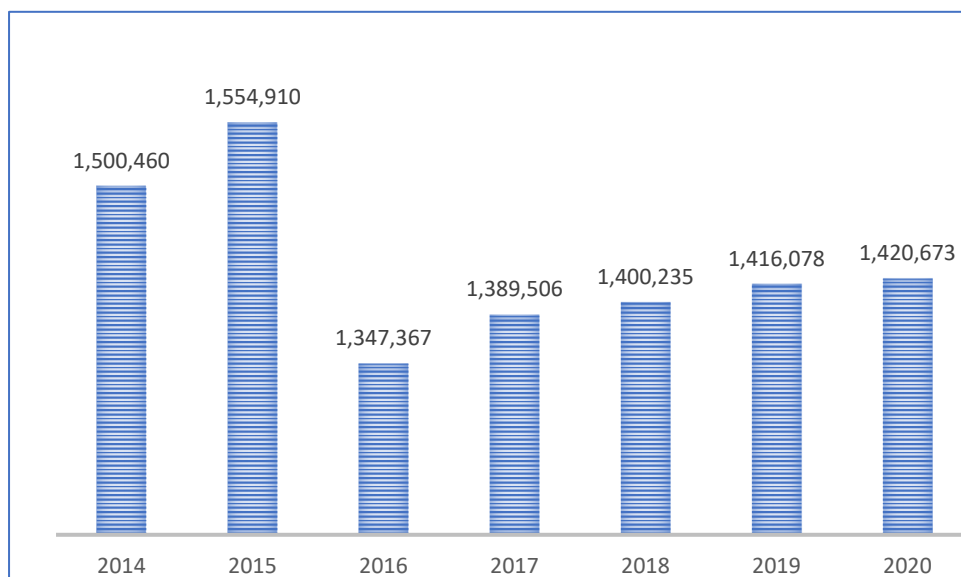


Figure 3 Number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan in the period Jan 2014-March 2020.

Source: UNHCR

2.3.7. Prevention of Abuse of Internet and Social Media

Websites

To prevent abuse of internet and social media, National Response Centre for Cyber Crime wing is reacting to different events happening in online sphere. The problem, however, is that they are acting to counter propaganda and other abuse material particularly hate speech or to take the perpetrators into custody, but no information is available on whether any of these perpetrators are trialed. The approach of FIA is reactionary rather than proactive and preventative. In online sphere, hate speeches are circulated “without effective check from the

authority” (PIPS, 2020, p. viii). In 2017, a study found that 41 out of the 64 banned organisations (the number has now reached 79) were actively present on Facebook and have different groups with hundreds and thousands of members and followers on the social media platform (Haque and Bashir, 2017). There is also no mechanism to prevent fake news, extremist propaganda and extremists’ online activities.

2.3.8. Concluding Karachi’s Operation, Zero Tolerance for Militancy in Punjab, and Empowering Baluchistan’s Government for Political Reconciliation

Operation in Karachi was led by Rangers of Pakistan which was started in September 2013 against the four main violent groups i.e., the TTP, sectarian outfits, ethno-nationalist armed wings that mostly work for different political parties, and criminal gangs working in different parts of the city. Following the announcement of NAP, the operations was continued and mostly targeted Al-Qaeda, Al-Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent, *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi*, *Jundullah* and ISIS affiliates or inspired groups (PIPS, 2020, pp. 55–57). During the operation, several militants and group leaders were killed. It is believed that the operation has achieved its objectives as the security situation in the city has improved and the number of target killings saw a steep decline from 965 in 2013 to 13 in 2018 (The Express Tribune, 2019). According to statistics issued by Rangers on five years’ performance, 2013-2018, a total of 14,327 raids were carried out in which

close to eleven thousand (10,716) suspects were arrested and handed over to police for further action. In addition, thousands of light and heavy arms and hundreds of kilograms of explosive material were recovered during the operation (Rehman, 2018). However, many believe that street crimes still exist and that the drivers of extremism and ethno-nationalist crime persist for which further action is needed (PIPS, 2020, p. 58).

NAP also called for zero tolerance in Punjab to militancy, which is the most populated province of the country. Punjab government carried 108,180 search operations, 2,821,324 stop & search on different checkpoints and arrested 21,632 suspects between 2015 and 2017 (PIPS, 2020, p. 20). Similarly, in February 2019, the interior ministry decided to ban *Jumat-ud-Dawa (JuD)*, and soon after the government of Punjab took administrative control of *madrassas* and mosques, *Jamia Masjid Subhan Allah and Madrassa Al-Sabir*, in Bahawalpur associated with *JuD* and *Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM)* (Dawn, 2019). Over 900 assets of *JuD* and *JeM* were also frozen of which 611 were frozen in Punjab only (DTNext, 2020). Similarly, in May 2019, a media outlet claimed that Punjab government had seized 500 properties and other assets associated with *JuD* which included *madrassas*, schools, hospitals and ambulances (Jang, 2019). Despite these measures taken by the government, the sectarian violence is on its peak in the province. The recent violent protest of TLP is an example of this. The federal government declared TPL as a terrorist

organisation, who were served with stipend by military administration after protest of the same violent nature in November 2017 (Khan, 2017).

Baluchistan has been ignored and deprived from development since the independence of Pakistan which made this province more fragile. Despite the abundance of natural resources, this province is the poorest and most underdeveloped in the country which makes this province a fertile ground for separatists and militancy. The NAP called for the political reconciliation, which unfortunately could not be implemented to date (Baloch, 2021). In 2015, a program, *Pur-Aman* [peaceful] Baluchistan was launched to bring the angry Baloch separatists to national mainstream, if they lay down their weapons and agree to the rehabilitation support (Haider and Shah, 2015). Furthermore, after the NAP, Dr Abdul Malik Baloch, the then chief minister of Baluchistan, was given mandate by the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif for the implementation of the NAP clause. To this end, a delegation of provincial government held negotiation with Brahamdagh Bugti, leader of Baloch Liberation Army. However, because of unstable government and shuffling of the Chief Minister made negotiation impossible to continue it (PIPS, 2020, pp. 44–46). Similarly, the current government has promised for the political reconciliation, however, despite, Baluchistan's government demands for the implementation of the NAP (Zafar, 2019), the campaign is yet to be initiated as no efforts have been made to reach to Baluch insurgents (Kakar, 2019a). During COVID–19 pandemic a

clear escalation of militants activities can be seen in the province (for details see ANI, 2021; BBC News, 2021b, 2021a; Kunwar, 2021).

As evident from this critical assessment of the NAP, it is apparent that the plan has been partially implemented which resulted in partial or short-term success in form of establishment of government writ and decrease in terrorist incidents in the county. The following section discusses the impacts of the NAP on terrorism.

2.4. Impact Effectiveness

The plan, NAP, has been effective in achieving its objectives related to terrorism in short-term as shown in figure 2 above. The Pakistani military chased and crushed the militants' organisations and their members in operations in different parts of the country. Operation *Radul Fasaad* in the Tribal districts resulted in restoring the government writ and establishment of negative peace. However, for several reasons the plan has not proved effective in the long run. First, the terrorist incidents still happen in different parts of the country. In the Tribal districts – where intense military operations were conducted and military still holds partial administration of the region – the militants are still a threat, which is very much contrary to government's claims of “broken the backbone” of militants (Dawn, 2017a). Militant attacks civilians as well as the security forces in the region (D. Wazir, 2021). People of the region are still in a chaos as

they feel unsafe there. Ahmad Khan, a university student, described the situation as:

“Before the military operation in the region, people involved in some illegal activities or involved with militant/terrorist groups were the ones who would be afraid. But now the situation regarding fear, I believe, is worst because every individual is afraid of being killed or harmed” (A. Khan, 2021).

Interestingly, locals of the region also question Pakistan army’s failure to keep the region clear of militants especially given the fact that the military has checkpoints on all connecting roads leading to the region. Some even use the slogan "*yeh jo dehshat gardi hai, iss ke peechai wardi hai,*" which means "the military uniform is behind this terrorism"(BBC News, 2018b; Tanzeem, 2018). PTM is one of the biggest critics of Pakistani military and usually use this slogan in their public gatherings. Similarly, some of the banned organisations/groups are active in the country with new names. Moreover, some recent reports have pointed that Al-Qaeda in Indian Sub-continent is active in the region with its membership estimated to be between 150 and 200 (Rana, 2020).

Second, there is a major shift in the strategy of the TTP. The organization shifted its focus from the KP and Tribal districts to Baluchistan province. It is important to note that this province also has separatist terrorist groups and is the most underdeveloped and deprived one in the country. This atmosphere of the region gives edge to TTP in their regrouping and conducting attacks. In

September 2020, different splinter groups pledged to the TTP new chief Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud (Ahmed, 2020; Gul, 2020; Muhammad and Noorzai, 2020). Since then TTP is active and conducting attacks in the region, threatened women rights groups and even invited other extremist groups for collective struggle (Ahmed, 2021; Dawn, 2021a, 2021e, 2021g; Nihad, 2021; Pakistan Today, 2021; The Express Tribune, 2021; Zafar, 2021). These activities not only indicate their regrouping but also their strength in the country. It is also worth mentioning that it seems that TTP is targeting China's presence in the region (Ramachandran, 2021), and importantly, certain parts of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor will pass through and end on the Gwadar port of Baluchistan province.

Third, extremism on one hand is spreading like fire in woods in the country (Orakzai, 2019, p. 760), while on the other hand NAP failed to prevent abuse of internet and social websites. The recent TLP protest in different parts of the country is an example and question mark on the implementation of the policy (Hashim, 2021a, 2021b; Janjua, 2021). Rizwan Chudhari, a university professor and expert in the field of terrorism studies commented as:

“The extremist propaganda material is easily available in the country and even the ISIS has roots in the society which is demonstrated by the recent attempt of a university student to travel to Syria who was detained at Lahore international airport. Similarly, the social media is an easy source to get to extremist material. Different extremist groups are actively propagating and

delivering hate speeches, but we do not see any action against them despite the presence of laws” (Chudhari, 2021).

The right-wing extremist are also enjoying an almost absolute freedom in the country. Extra-judicial killing in the name of blasphemy is on the rise as several accused of blasphemy have been killed and hundreds of cases have been registered with police (Euronews, 2017; Shams, 2017; BBC News, 2018a; Khan, 2019; Hashim, 2020; Kermani, 2020; Noorzai and Momand, 2020). Similarly, hate speech is a common practice in both physical and virtual space. Tawab-ur-Rahman shared a recent activity on social media as:

“Hate speech, fake news, propaganda, and spreading conspiracy theories is a common practice in Pakistan. One can find hundreds of examples of these activities just by doing a simple Facebook search. Recently, a religious cleric was spreading conspiracy theories regarding the COVID-19. Nobody acted against him until eventually some of social media activists reported him to the FIA. The FIA then took actions and arrested him but interestingly he has not been punished but instead a video was released by the same cleric in which he can be seen reading from a script and asking the public to follow SOPs and cooperate with government. Following the release of this second video people started making fun of the cleric and would say that the FIA had updated the software of the cleric” (Rahman, 2021).

Additionally, in February 2021, the federal religious ministry and ministry of education announced five new boards for the registration of the *madrassas* (Ali, 2021; Naqvi, 2021). Before this there were only five boards with which

the *madrassas* could be registered, but now it is ten in total. Despite the fact of registration and regulation of *madrassas* through these new boards, I believe that there is a vast possibility that it will give more space to sectarian violence as these new boards will give legitimacy to other sectarian groups in the country.

Fourth, besides some basic reform in the constitution to allow merger of the Tribal districts with KP, no special attention has given to these districts. And in addition, no judicial reforms have yet been brought. Consequently, the system is not trustworthy. Regarding the Afghan refugees, much has been done for their registration, however, due to the security situation in Afghanistan it was impossible to repatriate refugees. It will perhaps take long for Afghanistan to be stable and peaceful; therefore, Pakistan should think of alternative arrangements for managing Afghan refugees and maintaining peace in the country without depriving the refugees of any human rights. This is not possible without the assistance of international community, both financial and in expertise. If we want a to bring peace in the region then we ought to think of our policy mistakes made in the past and avoid repeating them.

Lastly, the FIA's approach towards preventing abuse of internet and social sites is more reactionary rather than proactive. The behaviour of the TTP has changed and they have adopted different strategy to regroup in the country. They chose different location in country. Baluchistan is the biggest and fragile province in country and if the militants took control of the province, then it will

be difficult to defeat them as the province shares border with Afghanistan as well as Iran, and any external threat can easily manipulate the security situation.

2.5. Conclusion

The NAP has two broad aspects i.e., hard, and soft measures to fight and counter terrorism and extremism. The hard measures and the aspects of the plan related to the Pakistani military administration were implemented soon after the plan was announced while those related to the civil government administration are yet to be fully implemented. The effectiveness of the military aspects of the plan is partially effective as the threat of terrorism still exist and is arguably even on the rise, and I fear the threat will increase in the following years if not tackled in time especially in Baluchistan. This will not only affect Pakistan's internal security situation but also affect peace in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of the foreign forces.

In the *Outcome* of the NAP, the policy executors took some initiatives by launching different projects, however, the impact of those projects is very limited. The level of extremism is increasing every next day as demonstrated by the recent violent protest of TLP. In Pakistani society culture and religion overlap each other. Therefore, the *madrassas* and their curriculum have great role in shaping society as demonstrated in the Cold War era. Hence, it is important to have strong accountability of *madrassas* and their curriculum to have a prosperous society.

Apart from this, the military operation in the Tribal districts has had positive impacts in the form of establishment of government writ, however, it has also impacted on the Tribal districts' social fabric and their local culture. These social and cultural transformation will be discussed in the following chapter in details. Though this study is the first academic effort to critically evaluate the NAP, a limitation of this chapter is that there is scarcity of independent as well as official reports which makes it difficult for any analytical tool to be used for measuring the effectiveness of this policy.

3. CHAPTER III – SOCIO-CULTURAL AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION IN TRIBAL DISTRICTS

3.1. Introduction

In the last chapter, I discussed the NAP of Pakistan in detail where I argued that the plan has so far been partially effective. Military operations, as part of the NAP, however, have had numerous side impacts on the lives of common people in the conflict-ridden area i.e., KP and the Tribal districts. The military operations subsequently resulted in the forced displacement of the people which changed lives for the residents of the area as they became settled in Peshawar, Islamabad, and other cities of the country. This section of the dissertation focuses on the socio-cultural and political transformation of the conflict-ridden Tribal districts. I term this as the *Side Effects* of these policies – NAP and military operations – on the social and cultural aspects of life. These impacts are either socially perceived as positive or negative. Positive impacts include change in the perspectives and attitudes of the locals, and more importantly the development of the political consciousness. While the negative impacts are the disturbance of the social fabric, impact on cultural elements – *Pardah*¹³ (seclusion), *Hujra*, (guest house) and *Jirga* (elder’s council). It is also significant to mention that culture, religion, and other social aspect of life

¹³ Study conducted by Syed Wasif Azim, found there are four forms of *Pardah* (for details see Azim, 2019, pp. 38–65)

overlap each other in the region. Therefore, one cannot be separated from the other.

This chapter flows as follow: first the concept of social transformation is explained within the specific context of the Tribal districts. I then explore the *Side Effects*, both positive and negative, of the aforementioned plan and military operations, particularly on socio-cultural aspect of life, and finally this is followed by a brief conclusion.

3.2. The Concept of Social Transformation in Tribal Districts

According to Groenewald (2000, p. 18), social transformation “refers to a process of change in the living conditions of people, human relationships, communities and a qualitative shift in the nature and character of human societies”. Scholars have investigated different drivers of social transformation. For instance, P. Drucker (1994, pp. 53–80) and Stephen Castles (2001, pp. 13–32) investigated the economic and political grounds for social transformation, while Groenewald (2000, p. 18) noted other aspects such as industrialisation, bureaucratization, rationalisation, and urbanisation etc. However, the existing literature on forced migration and social transformation is very scarce. The study of Stephen Castles (2003, pp. 13–34), highlights forced migration specially in the framework of global transformation but it is very broad and does not gives us context specific information. In case of Tribal district, primary reason for the social transformation is military operations and their forced

displacement from the region. Studying forced migration of these tribes are also important because the tribes of Tribal districts have lived a “homogeneous life and never left their stronghold” for centuries, while “their culture, customs and tradition remained unspoiled and uninfluenced by other cultures”(Mahsud, 2018, p. 99)¹⁴.

Similarly, studies (for example, Cavalcante, 2009; Shakoor, 2012; Azim, 2018, pp. 58–74, 2019; Mahsud, 2018; Levine *et al.*, 2019; Maqsood, 2019; Wahab, Azim and Jan, 2020, pp. 16–42) have found that violence, migration and forced displacement have affected the lives of the people in diverse ways. It is also argued that violence and forced migration have a huge impact on the living conditions of the people, their relationships and shift in the character of society (Castles, 2003, p. 19). Therefore, it is of immense significance to explore the phenomena of social transformation especially in the context of these Tribal districts.

The forced migration and military operations in Tribal districts boosted the social transformation process. According to Mahsud, “tribesmen are struggling to uphold their culture/traditional values, equip their new generation in the new settings” (Mahsud, 2018, p. 101). For the inhabitants of the region

¹⁴ Mahsud’s study only focused on case study of the Mahsud tribe of South Waziristan Agency [now district South Waziristan], however, his study provides some basic information on the transformation of *Jirga, Malakship* etc. His work is also relevant because, Pashtuns in general and these tribes, i.e., Mahsud, Wazir, Dawar, Afridi, Mohmand, Orakzai, Bangash, Shinwari, Safi etc, have identical lifestyle and follow or have at least followed Pashtunwali in the past.

over the age of forty, these cultural values and tribal identity are of prime importance, however, it seems the younger generation is not worried or concerned for these cultural values though poets and literate people are much worried about the shift in their culture (Wahab, Azim and Jan, 2020). The young generation is more focused on the development of the region, struggle for equal rights, and justice. This is exemplified by the case of PTM. In the following section these transformations will be discussed in detail.

3.3. Military Operations, NAP, and its Consequences –

“Positive” Side Effects

The aim of the military operations, as part of the NAP, was to restore the government’s writ and establish peace in the country in general and in the conflict-ridden areas in particular. These aims have been achieved to some extent as discussed in the previous chapter in details. However, as a reaction to the NAP and military operations this study found some other effects post conflict in the region which I term as *Side Effects*. These *Side Effects* are either positive or negative. The forced migration has left marks on the lives of the inhabitants of the Tribal districts. These impacts are the causes of social change in the region.

3.3.1. Behavioural Changes

Usually, violence has negative impacts on the lives of people, which is completely understandable but in case of Tribal districts, this has resulted in some positive impacts in the region. As discussed, the Tribal districts were kept under specific law (FCR) for over a century and the people were kept suppressed and underdeveloped. The locals usually avoided going out of the region and many travelled to other cities of Pakistan for the first time due to the forced migration, where they experienced urban lifestyle and facilities. This exposure brought certain changes in the behaviour of the people, for instance, the study of Mahsud found that the tribal identity has been overshadowed by the national identity after exposure to cities and urban life (Mahsud, 2018, p. 116).

3.3.2. Attitudes Towards Women

Culture is an important aspect that shapes attitudes and behaviours of people. In Tribal districts in particular, husbands would behave badly towards their wives in diverse ways. Living in a patriarchal society, women were usually confined to houses. They would do all domestic work, were not allowed to study, work, or in some instances would even be beaten by their husbands for violating a strict code of conduct. Since childhood, young boys would usually be told that they are strong and must not cry like girls. A man must control and suppress his wife as a wife is a man's pride and a man should not express love towards his wife as it will encourage the wife to argue with her husband.

Arguing with man would be considered an insult and sign of weakness on a man's part (Razaq, 2021).

Men would generally spend most of their time in *Hujra*, eat there, and go home late at night. As a result, a very limited time would be spent with families particularly with wives (Rida, 2021). Surprisingly, some of these behaviours were usually indirectly taught by mothers, while on the other hand the literacy rate was and still is very low and other exposures were very limited in these districts which led to a strong patriarchal and man-controlled society. However, after displacement from their home region and experiencing urban life, men learned a lot and the behaviour has changed to some extent. A detailed study conducted by the Humanitarian Policy Group in 2019 entitled "*The impact of displacement on gender roles and relations: The case of IDPs from FATA, Pakistan*" found positive impacts on the attitude of men, particularly with regard to their behaviour towards their families (Levine *et al.*, 2019). Naaz Afridi, a young athlete girl and university student, commented on the behaviour of her brother as:

"After displacing from Khyber Agency [now Khyber district] and settling down in Peshawar I see a big difference in the attitude of my brother. He used to follow customs and traditions very strictly. Rather than giving time to family, he used to spend most of his time in *Hujra* but after settling down in Peshawar city he goes to work and after work he is mostly home with his kids and wife. He not only supports my university studies but also supports me to become

a professional athlete. I believe, this change was not possible if we were not displaced” (Afridi, 2021).

Though change in the behaviour of the people is a positive sign which could lead to a progressive society, social transformation by means of the military operation and forced migration is questionable, and one has to decide for oneself whether ends justify the means or not.

3.3.3. Attitudes Towards Education

Even though the government schools have either been destroyed or are not functional since the resolution of the conflict, the locals are focusing more on education of the young generation. The private schools in the region fill the gap and share the burden with government. Having witnessed that people of the urban areas are living relatively better lives, parents want a bright future for their children. That is why parents want their children to get quality education – something from which they themselves were deprived (Kamal, 2021). Even though majority of the people are from a poor background, they send their kids to private schools with the hope that they will have successful life and a bright future. Naqeeb Wazir, principal of a private school in the region said:

“Before the military operation, apart from a few, parents did not use to give any attention to educate their children, but now almost every parent bring their children to school. Before the operation, most poor people used to send their kids to madrassas as madrassas were free and most would even provide accommodation and food.

So, parents used to send them to madrassas and would not enquire what their kids were doing or what they were being taught.” (N. Wazir, 2021).

Despite the new focus on the education, current female literacy is 7.8 percent in the region which is alarming (Afridi, 2020). The issue needs to be addressed by the concerned authorities. Naqeeb Wazir, commented on female education as:

“Parents still fear the rogue element that could harm their daughters. Religious clerics are still opposing female education and though they would not speak in the open, they influence people. Some people also use culture to oppose female education, though the intentions of the parents have changed and if there is easy access to schools, security and other facilities then I believe parents will send their daughters to school” (N. Wazir, 2021).

Naqeeb Wazir further added that parent do not want to invest in female education the same way as they are willing to spend on their boys, so if the government provides and reconstructs schools in these districts then there is more chance that parent will send their children to schools. “People need a little motivation and easy access to educate their kids” (N. Wazir, 2021). Furthermore, the government has done almost nothing in this regard despite the support of the international community (Afridi, 2020).

3.3.4. Political Consciousness

Under the FCR, people of the region were not allowed to participate in political activities, however, after the merger of Tribal districts with KP, the inhabitants of the region are actively participating in the political activities of the country. The turmoil of the forced migration gave the young generation early exposure to other cities of the country which is why this generation is more active in politics as compared to the elderly people of the region. They also believe that war is not a solution to their problems and believe in political participation in the region. The PTM is a classic example of this political awareness. Most of the young generation enthusiastically participates in the gatherings of PTM (for details on PTM see Yousaf, 2019; A. R. Shah, 2020). Since 2018, PTM has been challenging the state narratives and demands justice and reproducing the missing persons from the region. Asif Dawar, a PTM leader, described PTM and the young generation as:

“PTM is the movement of the oppressed people. PTM wants to have equal rights and asks the Pakistani state that if it has successfully broken the backbone of the terrorists as it claims, then why is there target assassination of innocent people, why are thousands of sons/brothers/husbands and fathers still missing? If these people are detained by the security forces, then they should be trailed under the constitution and legal system of Pakistan. If found guilty, they should be punished but if they are innocent, then they should be released. The young generation knows how the Pakistani state has used the Tribal district for its interests by killing

thousands of civilians. The young generation is aware of their right and they struggle for that” (Dawar, 2021).

Though PTM is a peaceful and non-violent movement that demands justice and constitutional rights under the constitution of Pakistan, the Pakistani state has continuously arrested their leader and accused them of being enemies’ agents in the country (Afzal, 2020), however, they continue their struggle by peaceful means.

3.3.5. Culture of Peaceful Protest

Another important side effect of NAP and military operations is the culture of peaceful protest in the region. The region has been in war for decades and gun culture was promoted by both the Pakistani state and international actors such as the US during the Cold War, and consequently, people of Tribal districts were more violent in nature. Before the military operations, people would use guns to solve their problems but, the young generation, interestingly, is more focused on peaceful means for getting their constitutional rights and their other demands which means that guns have been replaced by peaceful protest (Sadiq, 2021). The culture of peaceful sit-in protest was started by the PTM in January 2018 after the extrajudicial killing of Naqeeb Ullah Mahsud, a 27-years old father displaced from Waziristan during the force migration, in alleged staged (which was later declared by the Supreme Court as “staged”) encounter in Karachi (Ali, 2018b; Hashim, 2018; Qazi and Atif, 2018;

Shalmani, 2018). Ali Orakzai, an activist from Tribal districts, described pre-conflict gun culture as:

“Carrying guns was Pashtun culture in the region. People used to use these guns against their enemies as there were hostilities among the tribes. These hostilities still exist but the only change we can see is that people are not using violent means for it. The locals now know that if they want to attract the attention of the government and international community to their problems then they must do it through peaceful protests. People demand from government to retain peace, stop target killing in the region. Janikhel¹⁵ incidents and their peaceful protest is a recent example ” (A. Orakzai, 2021)

The inhabitants of the region now have peaceful protest as the only tool which they are using to demand their rights. This again is the result of the forced migration and exposure to different cities of Pakistan. Similarly, the young generation who are actively involved in the PTM or other political activities are university graduates, and they know that violence is not a solution to their problems and rather peaceful demonstrations are solution to their problems. How a war generation is so peaceful is interesting and I believe, a detailed study is needed to investigate the phenomena.

¹⁵ In March 2021, four bodies of teenagers of the Janikhel tribe were found in the Bannu district of KP and soon after relatives of the teenagers started sit-in protest for enquiring and punishing culprit(s). The protest was called off after an agreement with district administration (for details see Dawn, 2021c; Z. K. Khan, 2021)

3.4. “Negative” Side Effects

Violence, crisis, and wars have always left negative marks on society, which is evident in the case of Tribal districts. Militancy and military operations as part of the NAP have had a huge impact on the society. KP in general and Tribal districts in particular is culturally completely different to the rest of the country. Pakistani state’s policies have completely avoided/ignored cultural difference of the region when formulating policies. Consequently, the military operations in the Tribal districts have shaken the social fabric. Interestingly, some studies also point out to the state’s role in suppressing Pashtuns and disrupting Pashtuns’ traditions and cultures. For instance, a study conducted by the M. Taimur S. Khan demonstrates three important and interconnected arguments. Firstly, Pakistani state uses educational institutions and media to compel Pashtuns indirectly to leave their language and culture to construct Urdu-based national identity. Secondly, “Pakistani state uses the rural-urban divide as a means to encapsulate indigenous Pashtun homeland and disrupt Pashtun’s traditional, social, cultural, and economic practices”. And lastly, “Pakistani state imposes a normative state-sanctioned temporality that erases Pashtun’s pre-Islamic and secular past in an attempt to construct the Muslim based Pakistani identity” (Khan, 2016, p. ii). In the following section I will discuss some “Negative” *side effects* of the NAP. These are the effects which are considered as negative in the culture and society.

3.4.1. NAP and its Impact on *Pardah*

Pardah is an important aspect of the Pashtun's code of conduct commonly known as *Pashtunwali*.¹⁶ There are four forms of *Pardah* in Pashtuns – “women *Pardah*, home *Pardah*, elder men *Pardah* and locality *Pardah*” – as the study of Azim *et.al.*, (2018, pp. 64–85) found. This study highlighted the impact of violence on *Pardah* in Swat. This part of the dissertation took inspiration from the aforementioned study but with a slightly different focus that is the impact of the NAP and military operation rather than the impact of the violence in general on Pashtun's *Pardah* in Tribal districts. Though militants suppressed women, banned female education and did not allow women to go outside of their houses alone without the company of at least a teenage male relative, people of Tribal districts generally think that they did not violate *Pashtunwali* and *Pardah*. However, they believe that the Pakistani state policies particularly military operations violated the Pashtun's code of conduct. The forced migration is considered as the first step in the disruption of Pashtuns' *Pardah*. Saeed Wazir, a PhD candidate in International Relations, described a situation of becoming displaced from their native village as:

¹⁶ (*Pashtunwali/Pakhtunwali/Pukhtunwali* is an unwritten code of conduct which Pashtuns are practicing since centuries. for details see Jan, 2010, pp. 25–36; Ross, 2010, pp. 11–22; Ali, 2013; Azim, 2019, p. 4; Khan, Faheem and Gul, 2019, pp. 266–267)

“The security forces gave us a short time to vacate the area. It was a chaotic time and when we reached to security check post, we were told to make two lines: one of men and the other of women. It was a time of extreme embarrassment and shame. At that time, I would have killed those Punjabi soldiers if I had a gun, no matter who they were” (S. Wazir, 2021).

In war situation, the attitude of security forces is generally rude and harsh but as discussed above this region has a unique and different culture which should have been taken into consideration before launching any military operations in a region which is culturally very sensitive. The locals from the region would have preferred if their women were dealt with by female officers rather than men, however, it is also a bitter truth that there is very limited number of women in the law enforcement agencies. According to a news report, there are about 4,000 women serving in armed forces of Pakistan who are mostly confined to medical work or administrative jobs (Alarabiya News, 2013), while the number of women in police force is less than one percent (Sheikh, 2015). It is important to take the locals’ perspectives and culture into consideration while conducting such large-scale military operations.

Similarly, there was no coordination between civil and military administration to deal with mass migration. Before launching military operation, the civil administration in the cities were unaware of the short-term consequences and the federal government was not ready to accommodate millions of forced migrants properly. Even the government of other provinces

refused to help or accommodate these migrants (Dawn, 2009a). When these migrants were put in makeshift camps, the concept of women *Pardah* got reduced to mere words because it was practically impossible to keep the traditional *Pardah* in camps. *“Living in camps was the worst experience of life for us. In IDPs camps our women Pardah was not possible, and I still feel ashamed and cannot walk with pride, perhaps it killed our hearts”* (Safi, 2021). After return to their homes the lives of the forced migrants did not return to normal as their *Pardah* is still being violated by the security forces. Irfan Safi shared a recent violation of the home *Pardah* as:

“A soldier tried to get into a house and was killed by a woman. It is believed that the soldier had bad intention towards the women. But interestingly this incident has not been reported by any Pakistani news media channels or newspaper” (Safi, 2021).

Similarly, Jan Alam from Mazrina area of Mohmand district said that people are not happy with the checkpoints of the armed forces as they violate the local customs and home *Pardah*. He described the complaints of his neighbours as:

“My neighbour came to me and asked if I know some influential people or authority to whom we can complain and remove these Punjabi [Pakistani army] from the mountain peak. They can see inside our houses from that point which is really embarrassing” (Jan, 2021).

For Pashtuns in general and inhabitants of the Tribal districts in particular, *Pardah* is a very important element of the society which has been violated by the security forces. Pakistan's policies during and after the military operations did not take this into consideration which is alarming. Frustration of the people can lead to escalation of violence. This time the escalation can be based on ethnicity rather than in the name of Islam. Similarly, this frustration can be easily manipulated by enemies of peace. Apart from effecting *Pardah*, NAP has affected *Hujra*, which is discussed in the following section.

3.4.2. NAP and its Impact on *Hujra*

Hujra is an important element of *Pashtunwali*. The state policies have had a huge impact on the functioning of the *Hujra* and its role in Tribal districts. *Hujra* has been known as “*Da Aman Koor* (the house of peace)” (Ahmad and Muhammad, 2019, p. 121) and used for centuries to host male guests and offer them *Melmastyā* – “hospitality (the socio-cultural practice of entertaining guests)”, educating young generation particularly on *Pashtunwali* and other topics of interest to a family, and gathering for events of sorrow or joy (*Gham-Khadi*) (Azim, 2019, p. 104). The Pakistani state policies particularly military operations conducted under the NAP have done irreparable damage to this centuries old Pashtun institution.

The study of Syed Wasif Azim (2019) argues that both militants and the military have negatively affected sitting in *Hujra* even though the two had

different aims in Swat. The militants contributed directly while the military have indirectly affected *Hujra* in Swat. The militant approach was to control content of *Hujra*, however, after military operations in Swat, the lack of peace and fear of being insulted on streets compel locals to avoid sitting in *Hujra*. The situation is identical in Tribal districts as well. As a side effect of the military operation in the region, sitting in *Hujra* is very limited now. There are a couple of reasons for this. Firstly, the elders who used to sit in *Hujra* have either been killed by militants or they are scared to set in *Hujra* anymore. Secondly, because of lack of positive peace in the region and to avoid any possible troubles the locals no longer want to sit in these cultural places.

Sitting of men in *Hujra* until late at night while entertaining guests and playing musical instruments was a part of the Pashtuns' culture. The military operation in the region did not restore this centuries old custom and important part of culture. The inhabitants of Tribal districts were hoping that military operation would their customs and culture to flourish by restoring peace in the region, however, the complete opposite of what they were expecting has happened. Though the military has not stopped or prohibited locals from sitting in *Hujra*, but the lack of free movement at night due to restrictions imposed by security forces, locals are unable to maintain *Hujra* in a traditional way. Similarly, due to fear of being insulted by security forces or even being killed by "unknowns", elders of families do not sit in *Hujra* anymore and advise the youth to avoid sitting until late at night. The recent killing of teenagers who

were sitting in front of a local shop in the evening demonstrates these fears of the locals. For this incident FIR was registered against the paramilitary forces in the region after relatives of the teenagers sat in protest and then started marching towards Islamabad – the capital of the country (Radio Mashal, 2021a, 2021b).

Hujra has not only been a place for entertaining guests but has been a source of socially acceptable entertainment for all age groups. In *Hujra*, *Rubab* – a local musical instrument – would generally be played by one while the rest would usually sing along. As parents and their children would sit together to get entertained, parental control was easy as no vulgar elements would be allowed. Elders would keep a strict eye on their youngsters' behaviour and would treat them as needed to teach them customs and traditions. In the presence of elders, the youngsters would behave themselves and they would be careful about when and what they speak. Similarly, youngsters talking among themselves in the presence of elders is considered as rude and insulting behaviour, therefore, most of the time the youngsters would sit silently, listen to, and observe the elders' conversation to learn the way elders speak and argue.

As the elders now avoid sitting in *Hujra* this source of collective entertainment is replaced by the individual entertainment particularly in the form of mobile phones. The use of mobile phones for watching movies and listening to music makes parental control over the content the youth watch really hard. One of the reasons for this is that most elders are not familiar with the new

technologies and the young can easily skip watchful parental eyes. The use of mobile phone for watching videos and films is really alarming, and it can easily lead to the radicalisation of the youngsters in the region. The youth use latest technology to share content with each other which can be an easy source of spreading propaganda material of terrorists or rogue elements in the society. Saeed Wazir described the situation of checking his younger cousin's mobile phone as:

“My younger cousin gave me his phone with hesitation when I asked for it. I checked his phone’s gallery and found several pictures and short video clips. The pictures were of killed terrorists. After asking him about the pictures he explained it that ‘look they are smiling, and that’s because they are martyred’. I deleted those picture and video clips and strictly forbid him from keep such things in his phone.” (S. Wazir, 2021)

Saeed Wazir is an educated inhabitant of the region and perhaps knew about the phenomena of radicalisation but those who are not aware of the problem how can they control or educate their youngsters about the said issue. As mentioned, the elders themselves are not very good with the use of new technologies which makes the problem even harder to be addressed by parents. *Hujra* was an institution that fulfilled all these responsibilities, and which is not functioning ideally anymore whereas on the other hand the Pakistani education system does not give any awareness of the issue of radicalisation or teach anything on sexual education.

Perhaps if the security situation and the traditional *Hujra* functioning was restored after the military operations, *Hujra* could have been very useful in educating the youth and preventing the potential threat of radicalisation in the region. If *Hujra* functioning is fully restored, I believe this institute could be the cheapest, easiest, and highly efficient way for educating youth, preventing radicalisation, developing an alternative narrative, and even preventing terrorism in the first place rather than countering it. Some people might question and blame *Hujra* for providing space to militants and rogue elements in the region, however, the answer to that is twofold. Firstly, for decades a specific extremist version of Islam was promoted in the country which led to violence in the region resulting in the killing/murdering or displacement of most elders. Secondly, after the declaration of the so-called “war on terror” in Afghanistan, both Pakistani and the US security forces failed to prevent the spill over of Al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders and members to the region which caused disruption to the local culture and traditions. However, some of the local traditions and cultural elements such as *Melmasty* and *Nanawaty* (hospitality and asylum) can also be blamed for the establishment of terrorist roots and eventual take-over of the region.

3.4.3. NAP and its Impacts on *Jirga*

Jirga is one of the most important and powerful institution of the Pashtun society (Barth, 1969, p. 120; Mahsud, 2018, p. 131). *Jirga* has been described by scholars as a “reflection of Athenian democracy” in which

influential men perform legislative, judicial and executive functions by exercising conflict resolution techniques such as mediation, arbitration and conciliation etc (Khalid, 2014, pp. 27–41; Mahsud, 2018, p. 131). Member of *Jirga*, in pre-partition time, would have been appointed by the colonial masters and later a Pakistani state representative commonly known as PA – Political Agent – the most powerful person in the region locally known as *Badshah* (King). *Jirga* was a tool for the operation of the FCR which allowed the colonial masters to easily bribe the *Maliks*¹⁷. Those who were not supportive or loyal to the British and later to the Pakistani state would be ignored and slowly removed from the *Malikship* (Akins, 2018, pp. 1140–1149).

The institution of *Jirga* became weak with the passage of time and many believe that *Jirga* had weakened even before the 9/11 and if it had been stronger then it would have prevented the emergence of militants in the region (Mahsud, 2018, pp. 131–133). This argument is true to some extent, however, the state policies in the Cold War era are again responsible for weakening this institution. The Cold War policies strengthened the religious elites and gave them more value. Those religious elites later then also targeted elders and those who were experts in the *Jirga* process. Additionally, it seems that the younger generation does not trust *Jirga* or at least the existing elders (*Maliks*). Some even blame

¹⁷ Maliks are the elders of the tribes who represent their tribes on different occasions, mostly appointed by the PA and they did receive allowances from British Raj and later on from Pakistani state.

them for the rise of conflict in the region. Jamsheed Orakzai, a human rights activist, commented on the functioning of *Jirga* as:

“*Jirga* remains in name only. It does not contribute to or produce any humanistic outcomes. Thousands of people are missing from the tribal districts while the elders are fast asleep. PTM is struggling to raise awareness on this issue [missing person] and demands government for their constitutional and human rights. Members of the *Jirga* are just puppets in the hands of commissioners similar to as they were puppets of PA in the past”(J. Orakzai, 2021).

Before the crises in the region, those who were experts in the *Jirga* would participate in *Jirga* for the sake of God which would usually result in humanistic outcomes, but this is not the case anymore. Ahmad Gul, an elder from the Tribal districts now settled in Peshawar described *Jirga* as:

“The aim of *Jirga* was to provide easy and quick justice; however, it does not serve this purpose anymore. Those who do *Jirga* demand money from the parties. It is their source of income. Once a person gets money then it is not possible to give a fair decision on any issue. They also give dates [for hearings] like the Pakistani judicial system and delay the decision just for the sake of money.” (Gul, 2021).

There are very few people left who will give fair judgements, however, their influence in *Jirga* is very limited. “Some honest elders are still alive, and they do *Jirga*, but they have very little influence on the decisions. As these few

elders cannot influence to produce fair decisions, they avoid doing *Jirga*.” (Gul, 2021).

Jirga used to execute their decision by establishing a *Lashker* (militia) of the locals. However, it is no longer possible because of a different security situation in the region. Before the military operations, the decision of the *Jirga* would get supported by the administration of the PA. *Jirga* decision was also acceptable to all because there was no alternative system to appeal in but after the merger of Tribal districts with KP, the parties can deny or refuse to accept *Jirga* decision and take their issue to the judicial system of Pakistan. This has further reduced the impact of *Jirga*.

The skills required for *Jirga* have not been transferred to the young generation. They also do not know its importance as they have not experienced or observed it. *Jirga* has transformed from a humanistic to a professional institute and is the source of income to many. It seems likely that the young generation, in the next couple of decades, will neither know of nor be able to practice this centuries old Pashtun institution for conflict resolutions.

3.5. Conclusion

Violence always leaves marks on a society and its inhabitants. The military operation in Tribal districts has produced some side effects. Some of these are positive, and some are negative which has resulted in socio-cultural transformation of the society. The positive impacts include behavioural changes

especially changes in the behaviour of the men towards women. This study found that the attitude of men has changed since the forced migration to other parts of the country and thus getting exposure to urban lifestyle. Before migration to cities, men used to think that women should be suppressed and be confined to home only, but after getting exposure and experience through their displacement a clear difference can be seen in the attitudes of men of the region. Similarly, their attitudes towards education have also changed. Parents now want to educate their children, particularly girls, unlike before when they would either oppose it or would not give any special attention to it. Though a gun culture and extremism had been propagated for decades but the displacement from their hometowns and the merger of the region with KP has developed a certain level of political consciousness and people now demand their rights through peaceful demonstrations and protests. *“We were used to solving our problems by using guns but now time has changed – we do not need guns, we need pens”* (Gul, 2021).

The military operations in the region have badly affected the social fabric of the society. It has violated Pashtun's *Pardah*, and centuries old institutions of *Hujra* and *Jirga*. The state policies neither took these cultural issues into consideration during the military operation nor they are making any effort for the restoration of the local traditions and customs now. These violation of the local culture and customs have sown seeds of hatred against Pakistani military in the hearts of the inhabitants of Tribal districts. Other socio-cultural

elements such as the relation between *Kashar Mashar* (elder and youngers), *Izzat* (honour, self-respect) *Melmastya* (hospitality) and *Gham Khadi* (wedding and funerals) etc have been transforming and a clear change can be seen in it. A detailed study is needed to investigate the phenomena of this socio-cultural transformation and its impact on the lives of the inhabitants and most importantly its impacts on the security situation of the region.

4. CHAPTER IV – CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Conclusion

This dissertation deals with the critical evaluation and assessment of effectiveness of CT policies of Pakistan, particularly NAP and military operations in KP and Tribal districts. Pakistan spent billions of dollars and lost thousands of lives in the fight of countering terrorism, however, there is still space for doubt about whether the CT policies worked or not. There is very narrow scholarly discussion on the effectiveness of the CT policies particularly in the case of Pakistan. Scholars have previously evaluated Pakistan's strategies by focusing on decrease in the number of terrorist incidents and drawn conclusion that Pakistan's CT policies are successful. My quest in this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the National Action Plan, for which I adopted an analytical tool – Eric Van Um & Daniela PISOIU's Model of Effectiveness (2015) – to evaluate the CT policy. I argued that the NAP plan has been partially implemented and is partially effective. I also argue that the hard measures of the plan were implemented soon after the plan was announced, however, there is still a lot to be done to implement the soft measure of the plan. Moreover, I found that as a consequence of the NAP and military operations resulted in socio-cultural transformation in the Tribal districts region.

Terrorism is global threat and Pakistan has been confronted with terrorism for decades, but the threat became intense after the September 11

attack and the declaration of the so-called 'WoT' in Afghanistan. The US Operation Enduring Freedom overthrew Taliban government from Kabul, but both the US and Pakistan failed to stop spilling over of Taliban and Al-Qaeda members to Tribal districts near the Pak-Afghan border. Taliban regrouped in Tribal districts, and in 2007 laid the foundation of TTP. The TTP started targeting the US and alliance troops in Afghanistan and Pakistani forces in the region. Each Pakistani government approached fighting terrorism and extremism differently. These approaches include military operation, dialogues and even signing peace accords with militant groups, but the threat remained the same. Although Pakistan has been fighting terrorism for decades, it did not issue any comprehensive CT policy until 2014. Consequently, Pakistan's position on counterterrorism has been questioned by the international community as well as scholars in academia. The APS Peshawar attack brought government and opposition together and issued a twenty points agenda to be adopted to fight terrorism and extremism. The plan included both soft and hard measures such as military operations, strengthening counterterrorism institutions, countering extremism, propaganda, and establishing counterterrorism forces. Since 2001, Pakistan has lost \$126 million and 83,000 lives (Jamal, 2021), because of terrorism but it is still not clear whether these CT policies have worked. This study took guidance from conceptual framework, and used Eric Van Um & Daniela PISOIU's Model of Effectiveness (2015) as an analytical tool, which is suitable for this analysis.

I discuss that the plan, NAP, has not been as effective, as required and as argued by the state, in eradicating terrorist organisations and extremist ideology particularly. The military aspects of the plan were successfully implemented soon after the plan was announced, which has led to a short-term success in the form of establishing government writ in different parts of the country, particularly in the Tribal districts. However, the plan is not entirely effective in eradicating terrorism from the country and establishing positive peace in the Tribal districts. Terrorist organisations, especially TTP, are regrouping and have changed their geographical location for their activities from KP to Baluchistan more recently. However, inhabitants of the Tribal districts still fear rogue elements in the region. Furthermore, establishment of military courts was an important aspect of the NAP, which was controversial in itself, but still they were established. Majority of those individuals executed by these courts were not related to terrorism. These courts also violated constitutional and human rights by not giving the accused a chance of free and fair trial. In later years, some of the decisions of these courts were challenged in high court and were suspended by giving hundreds of pages long decisions.

Similarly, the soft measures have not been completely implemented, and still a lot of work needs to be done to achieve the desired goals. The NAP failed to strengthen counterterrorism bodies particularly NACTA, to enable them to work efficiently. In countering extremism, the state's approach is more reactive than proactive, while it has also failed to develop a common counter extremist

narrative. Though there is less glorification of the terrorist organisations, religious extremist groups secure sympathies of the public which is demonstrated by recent violent protests across the country. Extremist ideology still exists amongst the public, which is alarming because it could be a fertile soil for evil to flourish in. The number of *madrassas* is increasing every day, though the government is trying to bring them under ten religious boards. However, there is no mechanism to regulate their activities, particularly their curriculum. Similarly, finances of *madrassas* are not regulated except for those having their own bank accounts. As Pakistan is not yet fully digitalised country, majority of people are dealing in cash rather than bank transfers and using debit or credit cards. This makes it more difficult to regulate *madrassas*' finances in general and terrorist financing in particular. Similarly, in the online sphere, particularly on social media, groups and webpages of the banned terrorist organisations are present, and one can easily access extremist material by searching for keywords. Furthermore, the plan also failed to protect religious minority and their freedoms. Each year thousands of girls are forcefully converted to Islam. Similarly, hundreds of Hazaras (Shia) in Baluchistan are targeted by Sunni terrorist organisations each year.

Furthermore, as consequences of the NAP and military operations the Tribal districts are in the process of social-cultural and political transformation. The forced migration of the inhabitants from the region has led to some side effects. These side effects are positive as well as negative in their nature. In

other words, these are unintended side effects. The positive side effects are changes in the behaviour of the inhabitants towards women, more focus on education and participation in politics. Women used to be suppressed, confined to house, and very limited attention was given to female education. However, these trends are now changing. People have experienced urban lifestyle during their displacement to other cities in the country, which has changed their perceptions. On the other hand, there are several negative side effects of the NAP and military operations. These effects are on the culture – *Pardah*, *Hujra*, and *Jirga*. These effects have shaken the social fabric in the region. During and after the military operation in the Tribal districts, the local culture and customs were violated which is one of the reasons for the hatred in the hearts of the locals against the Pakistani military. To sum up, the NAP and military operations in the Tribal districts have partially been effective in fighting terrorism, but still a lot needs to be done to effectively counter extremism. Nevertheless, state policies have completely failed to consider social aspects in the region when addressing violent conflicts.

4.2. Research Implications

This project clearly highlighted the scarcity of literature discussing the effectiveness of the CT policies in Pakistan. Because of the security reasons and sensitivity of the topic, scholars tend to avoid topics related to security issue. There are two major reasons for that: first, there is lack of access to data, and secondly, theoretical, and analytical tools which could be used to draw solid

conclusions are lacking. Moreover, this project is a significant addition to empirical discussion, and it also provides guidelines for future studies in evaluating effectiveness of CT policies. Moreover, there are studies which highlight the impacts of violence and conflict on the lives of the inhabitants of conflict-ridden regions, but there is a gap in the literature examining how state CT policies impact the socio-cultural and political aspects of the residents of conflict-ridden areas. Through its focus on these neglected aspects in the literature, this thesis contributes significantly to existing studies.

4.3. Policy Recommendations

This study has investigated the effectiveness of the CT policies of Pakistan especially by focusing on the NAP and military operations. There are several shortcomings of Pakistan's CT policies and, therefore, below I suggest some policy recommendations, which can potentially help to improve and make Pakistan's CT policy more efficient.

Firstly, the state of Pakistan should clarify its approach towards terrorism by clearly defining its national security strategy. Pakistan's position on countering terrorism is doubtful as Pakistan's ISI has previously had good relationship with Afghan Taliban. However, currently Pakistan's position on CT remains unclear as the Afghan officials continuously blame Pakistan for having ties with Taliban. Pakistan should clearly define its approach towards terrorism.

Secondly, Pakistan's CT policy approaches are generally reactionary in nature, which needs to be changed. To prevent and to counter terrorism and extremism, Pakistan needs to be proactive rather than being reactive. We have witnessed that rogue elements were flourishing for years in Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA) and Tribal districts, but the government did not give any attention to it until the threat reached its peak. Pakistan's policies need to be proactive to prevent extremism in country. The first step which should be taken is to bring religious scholars from all sects to a common page, and to design a common curriculum based on the mutually acceptable teaching of Islam for the *madrassas*. The curriculum should also include modern and scientific education. The gap between the religious education and modern scientific education should be removed.

Thirdly, there is lack of checks and balances in the Pakistani institutions. They barely produce their annual reports, and those that produce annual reports based on their activities hardly ever join public debates. Hence, most of the policies are not implemented effectively to achieve intended results or objectives. Pakistan needs to develop a strong check and balance system in its state institutions. There is also a need of strengthening institutions in order to effectively implement the existing policies. Pakistan is also lacking institutional transparency, and as a result here is a lack of accountability in the institutions.

Fourthly, Pakistan needs to make its institution more transparent. The transparency will lead to public debate which will encourage researchers to

involve in policy debates. The researchers, scholars and public involvement in policy debates will be useful to avoid miscalculations in policies. Such scholarly debates, I believe, will bring new perspectives to the table, which will be useful in policymaking in long run.

Fifthly, to counter and choke terrorist finances, there is a need of digitalisation of the country to minimise dealings in cash. The country is not fully digitalised and therefore majority of the people do business in cash rather than using bank transfers, debit or credit cards. This lack of digitalisation gives more space to the terrorist financing as it is almost impossible to trace and track business in cash. This also gives more space to corruption in public offices, which leads to decreased effectiveness of the policies. The digitalisation will also contribute to increasing accountability and transparency of state institutions.

Lastly and most importantly, the country should have a national CT strategy, which should include context-specific policies carefully considering local culture & traditions, geography, social and political situations of the regions. This will enhance the effectiveness of the state's policies, as well as help avoid any unintended side effects. In the context of Pakistan in general and in the KP and Baluchistan province in particular, the local cultures, traditions, and customs are of great importance to consider while formulating CT policies. For example, Pashtuns in KP and Baluchistan share common culture, traditions, and customs, and these two provinces are mostly affected by militancy. Both

provinces also share border with Afghanistan and, therefore, it is important to take their culture and geographical location into consideration.

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Appendix A

The 20–Point Agenda of NAP¹⁸

1.	Implementation of death sentence of those convicted in cases of terrorism.
2.	Special trial courts under the supervision of Army. The duration of these courts would be two years.
3.	Militant outfits and armed gangs will not be allowed to operate in the country.
4.	NACTA, the anti-terrorism institution will be strengthened.
5.	Strict action against the literature, newspapers and magazines promoting hatred, extremism, sectarianism and intolerance.
6.	Choking financing for terrorist and terrorist organizations.
7.	Ensuring against re-emergence of proscribed organizations.
8.	Establishing and deploying a dedicated counter-terrorism force.
9.	Taking effective steps against religious persecution.
10.	Registration and regulation of religious seminaries.
11.	Ban on glorification of terrorists and terrorist organizations through print and electronic media.
12.	Administrative and development reforms in FATA with immediate focus on repatriation of IDPs.
13.	Communication network of terrorists will be dismantled completely.

¹⁸ (NACTA, 2014).

14.	Measures against abuse of internet and social media for terrorism.
15.	Zero tolerance for militancy in Punjab.
16.	Ongoing operation in Karachi will be taken to its logical end.
17.	Baluchistan government to be fully empowered for political reconciliation with complete ownership by all stakeholders.
18.	Dealing firmly with sectarian terrorists.
19.	Formulation of a comprehensive policy to deal with the issue of Afghan refugees, beginning with registration of all refugees.
20.	Revamping and reforming the criminal justice system.

Appendix B

S. No.	Name	Description	Interview date
1.	Muhammad Murad	A university professor	04 March 2021
2.	Alam Jan	A university student	11 March 2021
3.	Akmal Shah	A former policymaker	13 March 2021
4.	Dilawar Muhammad	A policymaker	15 March 2021
5.	Naaz Afridi	An athlete and university student	19 March 2021
6.	Raj Kumar	A member of Hindu community	21 March 2021
7.	Babar Baloch	A university lecturer	23 March 2021
8.	Qudrat Ullah	An independent researcher	23 March 2021
9.	Taimur Kamal	An educationist	28 March 2021
10.	Obaid Aslam	A lawyer	31 March 2021
11.	Ahmad Khan	A university student from Tribal districts	02 April 2021
12.	Rizwan Chudhari	A university professor	09 April 2021
13.	Naima Khan	Human rights activist from Tribal districts	09 April 2021
14.	Ali Orakzai	An activist	11 April 2021

15.	Jamal Ahmad	A TV anchor person.	13 April 2021
16.	Irfan Safi	A forced migrant	13 April 2021
17.	Khan Razaq	An elder form Tribal districts	15 April 2021
18.	Saeed Wazir	A PhD candidate at a university	16 April 2021
19.	Faizan Ullah Warich	An official	17 April 2021
20.	Naqeeb Wazir	A private school principal	18 April 2021
21.	Jamsheed Orakzai	A human rights activist	19 April 2021
22.	Mudassir Nawaz	A university lecturer	19 April 2021
23.	Rahmat Shah	A policymaker	21 April 2021
24.	Asif Dawar	A PTM leader	21 April 2021
25.	Khuram Ejaz	An activist Tribal districts	22 April 2021
26.	Syed Sadiq	An NGO worker from Tribal Districts	23 April 2021
27.	Ahmad Gul	A tribal elder	23 April 2021
28.	Gul Rida	A women rights activist	25 April 2021
29.	Tawab-ur-Rahman	A local from Peshawar	25 April, 2021
30.	Sher Alam	A government official in religious ministry	30 April 2021

