National Internal Security Policy:
An Analysis of Prospects and Challenges for Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This paper specifically focuses on the text and objectives of the National Internal Security Policy (NISP) 2014 to 2018. It has been the first ever policy document formulated under the civilian setup which investigated the detailed causes of terrorism and extremism thus proposing comprehensive policy recommendations for tackling these threats. As a soft component of NISP, the policy makers also envisaged a Comprehensive Response Plan (CRP)to gain the trust and confidence of the general populace in combating extremism and terrorism. National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) has been given the lead role in materializing the proposals of NISP on the ground. In this study, a critical analysis of NISP and the role of NACTA has been made to find out how effective this policy had proved so far in terms of mitigating the spate of militancy, extremism, terrorism and turning around the volatile security atmosphere in Pakistan. Various aspects of NISP have been analysed and effort have been made to find out any drawbacks either in the text itself or the way and scale it has been implemented so far.
KEYWORDS: Terrorism, Extremism, Militancy, Security, NISP, CRP and NACTA

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan had announced its first ever National Internal Security Policy (NISP) on 26th February 2014 with a clear objective of containing the menace of terrorism and militancy that has wrought havoc with the nation. It was the first ever policy document formulated under the civilian setup which investigated the detailed causes of terrorism and proposed comprehensive recommendations to tackle the threats. The text of NISP, which is spread over 94 pages had thoroughly discussed the various dynamics of terrorism and chalked out an all-encompassing scheme or roadmap to banish the menace from the country.

Broadly speaking, the NISP adopted a two-pronged strategy to take on the issue of extremism. The first strategy is the reflection of the realization that militancy could not be eradicated only by the employment of military means. Hence, the policy makers envisaged a Comprehensive Response Plan (CRP) which was nothing but the soft component of NISP. The main objective of this component was to gain the trust and confidence of the general populace in combating extremism and terrorism. It was to make it clear that government did not believe only in smashing the heads of terrorists but was also mindful of the problems and miseries that the terrorist activities and military operations might create. In short, it aimed to adopt a more holistic approach rather than an occasional one.

The issues that were proposed to be tackled through CRP was reconstruction of various infrastructure facilities that had been demolished and destroyed owing to terrorism. These included educational institutions like schools, colleges, health care facilities, roads, communication networks and supply of energy. All relevant agencies were to assess the damage done. National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) as coordinating agency was established to supervise the entire process.

Besides reconstruction, another objective was the rehabilitation of all the residents of the terror hit areas with special focus on the vulnerable portion of the society like women, children, and elders. The rehabilitation process would be executed through the fund available from both, the government and non-governmental organization (NGOs). NACTA would oversee the rehabilitation process and provided the necessary coordination among all those agencies involved in the rehabilitation process.

Reintegration was another important component that was incorporated into the soft part of NISP. This was to include bringing Madrassahs into the educational mainstream and to regulate them under the law of the land. One of the foremost objective was the development of a uniform national narrative against terrorism and religious militancy with the support of the religious scholars, intelligentsia, media and educational institutions.

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The basic aim of this component was to remove the confusion about militancy and to root out the ideological foundation of the militants.

Overhauling the prevailing legal system was also proposed to be tackled through CRP. This factor was designed to do away with the shortcoming existing in the criminal justice system and to tighten the loopholes that are usually exploited by the militants. It is pertinent to mention that all the above recommendations were to put into action under the supervision of the NACTA.

The hard component of NISP was termed as Composite Deterrence Plan (CDP). It ranged from the restructuring of National Internal Security apparatus, NISA and to make it proactive from reactive in its approach. Fostering the much-needed harmony and cooperation among the different intelligence agencies was also one of its features. Likewise tackling the targeted assassination, extortion, kidnapping for ransom, ensuring the safety of the key installation and institutions, de-weaponization, along with preventing the misuse of social, electronic, print media for the dissemination of radical views was proposed to be covered under this component of NISP. Moreover, to integrate the national data base and registration system to identify people residing in various parts of the country, their assets, and border control mechanism to regulate the lawful movement of Afghan refugees and putting a check on any unauthorized movement of people, drugs, weapons were also tasks that were put under the Composite Deterrence Plan (CDP).

CDP also included the formation of the Directorate of Internal Security (DIS) under NACTA to synchronize the functions and activities of some 33 military and civilian intelligence and operational agencies. The formation of Rapid Response Force (RRF), Counter Terrorism Departments (CTD) in federal capitals, all the four provinces, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan would be setup under the plan. There was also a proposal of setting up of civilian armed forces that would operate under the Ministry of Interior (MOI).

To isolate the militants, a proper scheme for disruption of their transnational network was to be launched which strived to cut off their financial connection. To this end, the cooperation of the international community would be sought along with the tightening of the anti-money laundering regimes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

National Internal Security Policy (NISP) is one of the major contributions of democratic government and All Parties Conference. It has been designed well, by involving major security agencies, civilians and military leadership. The major work ahead is the implementation of NISP in a true sense. Its implementation will test the seriousness on the part of the civilian government. Presently, the government is faced with serious problems like bad law and order as well as governance issues, especially in Baluchistan and FATA. Implementing NISP in these situations will be a tough job for the present government. The will and writ of the state institutions will be tested in this regard. In implementing NISP, the political will of the civilian government will be tested (Khosa, 2014). However, the attitude of one of the major ministry of the government i.e. Ministry of Interior (MOI) in this regard brings to fore a big question mark. Various steps specified in the NISP like registration of madrassahs, building national narrative against militancy and terrorism, and producing environment of cooperation among different intelligence and other security agencies have not been properly worked over by the civilian government till date.

From the literature, it has been assessed that one of the biggest problem faced by civilian government is that it has failed to effectively control the financing of terrorism. This financing is of two types. Firstly, financial support given to different madrassas based on religious support. Secondly, the monetary support given to extremist organizations which are working against the writ of the state. The former support is mainly given based on sectarian issues. Those madrassas which are run by Sunni sect are usually funded by Saudi Arabia and its Sunni allied states. On the other hand, the Shiasect madrassas are mainly supported by Iran. Taking concrete measures for controlling such funding is a big challenge for the government. The government tried through NISP to register madrassas in Pakistan. Moreover, it was aimed to check the funding of these madrassas. But such steps of government were opposed by religious political parties. "Special emphasis should be given to control money laundering and terrorist financing''. Similarly, the later support is mainly for the basic purpose of strengthening those extremist organizations which are working against the interests of the state. These organizations are continuously working against the writ of the state. Through their militant activities, the law and order situation of the country was deteriorating, especially in Baluchistan. NISP had been needed to be implemented properly in Baluchistan too. Otherwise, the results will not be fruitful as designed in NISP. Role of media in this regard is also very important. Media must not portray the activities of terrorists like heroes. There is need of consensus-based counter narrative against terrorism. In this regard, the role of media is also very important. Media is a powerful tool in modern days. Instead of spreading sensational news, it must play a positive role in curbing terrorism. Similarly, the government must introduce judges' protection programs and effective security protocols. Military courts are not the permanent solution for eradicating terrorists. The actual

need is to strengthen the judicial organ of the government. There is also need of providing security and protection to those witnesses who are giving their verdicts against terrorists.

Rana (2010) is of the view that there is need to build a national narrative against extremism. In the present situation extremism is defined differently by different people in Pakistan. Some people define it based on their political differences with other groups. Others define it based on religion and even some groups based on social differences. In such situation, it is very difficult to eliminate extremism. There must be consensus on the definition of extremism. It will only be possible in such situation for eradication of this evil from the Pakistani society. The major problem for NISP is the lack of consensus-based definition of extremism and terrorism.

The toughest test for NISP is the militancy in the land of Baluchistan. That part of Pakistan is currently faced with two kinds of problems. The first problem is the presence of ethnic based movement in that region. The history of this kind of movement is long but it took its ugliest form in the days of dictatorial rule of President General Parvez Musharraf. The second problem is more inspired groups of Deobandi interpretation of religion. Some extremist Deobandi groups are involved in terrorist activities against the Hazara Shias. Malik (2014) described that Deobandi Sunni sectarian groups claim responsibility for most of the attacks against the Hazara Shias. These groups carry out their activities time and again and role of the state is questioned because of turning blind eye to their activities. NISP is very difficult to be given the credit of working effectively on the eventful land of Baluchistan.

Farooq (2014) discussed another important challenge to national security policy. He believes that the political parties did not take the required interest in formulating security policy. The policy was prepared in six months. All the political parties were asked to contribute in the formation of this policy. However, these political parties did not take active interest and no significant suggestions were given for this security policy. The only exception in this regard was the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM). This lack of interest shows that the security policy was not the brain child of all the political parties. The actual reason behind this lake of interest is that two provinces i.e. Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have not been ruled by the ruling party at federal level i.e., Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). The lack of interest by these provincial governments and other opposition parties in the formation of national security policy shows that its implementation in these two important provinces is difficult.

According to Hussain (2016), one of the serious problems for NIPS is "the working of banned militant and sectarian outfits which are operating under new banners". The banned outfits are not properly monitored by the government which allows them an opportunity to regroup under different names. Though the NISP declares that the banned militant and sectarian outfits will not be allowed to function under new names, however, the government has not yet taken any serious step for the implementation of this section of NISP.

In the same way there is need of special government funding for NACTA to hire qualified staff. This staff will enable NACTA to work out of its own office premises. If NACTA is made limited to its premises, then it is of no use in countering terrorism. Therefore, there is a dire need of proper and adequate funding for NACTA by the federal government.

Zaidi (2014) holds that the primary purpose of this body, is to improve the level of coordination between all the intelligence agencies. Without proper and coordinated intelligence, it is difficult to control terrorist activities in the country. Pakistan presently has more than enough intelligence agencies and the required personnel. What is lacking is an effective coordination among all the civil and military intelligence agencies. NISP addresses this issue properly and emphasises that the "main responsibilities are improving coordinating intelligence". In the same way there is need of madrassah reforms as well as de-radicalizing of the youth. It will help the state to minimize the extremism and terrorist threats. The de-radicalized youth will contribute positively in the development of the state. In such cases, the NISP will be working properly and effectively. Moreover, there is need to de-radicalize the militant prisoner. They must be processed through a brain washing and rehabilitation program so that they could become more responsible citizens of Pakistan.

From the cited opinion it is concluded that Pakistani society is "deeply divided by emotive discourses." There are many people who are sympathizers of the terrorists. These terrorists are carrying out their activities based on the extreme interpretation of religion. The need is to develop a strong but inclusive discourse towards interpretation of religion. It will enable the people to distinguish between good and bad religious groups and may develop harmony among all the sects as well.

Similarly, the existing institutions are enough for tackling the threat of extremism. Their lack of capacity is the major area to be properly addressed by plans like NISP. These institutions like Frontier Constabulary (FC) and Islamabad Capital Territory Police (ICT) must be given proper attention for capacity building instead of replacing their work by new forces like Rapid Response Force (RRF). Creation of new forces results in redundancy of forces. The problems which arise from these steps are of two types. Firstly, the work of these forces overlaps with each other. Their areas of influence are not clearly divided. They overlap the functions and powers of each other. Secondly, such steps on the part of the government results in the financial burden over the machinery of the government. A huge chunk of money is diverted towards establishing new

forces instead of making the present forces efficient. Similarly, common people are ignored, and their grievances are not properly addressed.

After appreciating the positive aspects of NISP, Safi (2014) focuses on the loopholes of this security policy. He believes that "the approach of the National Internal Security Apparatus (NISA) needs to be changed from a reactive to a proactive approach with a positive stance towards the internal security issues. It is common tragic attitude of every government that it reacts to the steps taken by the terrorists. The actual need is to take certain steps before the activities of the terrorists. Through these measures the loss of life, property and liberty of the people of the state will be safeguarded. Reactive steps taken by government are of short term benefit for the people. They cannot address the long-term grievances of the people and cannot guarantee security.

In the same way, another point which is lacking during the initiation of NISP was that it was not presented in Senate of Pakistan by the government. It was because the government does not have the required majority in the Senate to pass it. The ugly part of this issue was that government was not serious to include certain positive responses and suggestions from the Senate which was dominated by the members of other opposition parties.

Hameed (2014) discussed that instead of all these shortcomings, the positive side of the NISP was that for the first time the fact was recognized that there was a lack of coordination among the security and intelligence agencies in Pakistan. Before NISP, this fact was usually brushed under the carpet. This resulted in the fact that no government addressed that true aspect of security which was lacking. It is NISP alone which has properly addressed this problem. Every problem can be resolved but the prior need is to identify the problem. Now that it is identified, its implementation needs seriousness on the part of the government.

The need is to "conduct research and propose measures for a national counter terrorism action plan". This is mainly the job of NACTA. In this regard the NACTA must play its role as a think tank. Though many such plans were chalked out earlier, but none was given due attention, financial help and space to work properly. As a result, such plans never saw the light of the day. NACTA can identify various causes of spreading terrorism if and only when it is enabled to conduct is free research. A dictated policy of research will be of no use. If the government or state agencies do dictate the researchers, they will not be able to properly identify the factors which leads to the activities of terrorism. An independent NACTA without any pressure from government or military will be able to work properly which is the major purpose of establishing this entity (Butt, 2011).

Moreover, there is also a greater challenge for the implementation of NISP because there are groups in Pakistan which are working against the state interests. "Groups like Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT) and Jaesh-e-Muhammad (JeM) do not target the Pakistani state institutions or civilians, however, their breakaway factions have joined the anti-state insurgents over the years". These groups are mainly believed to be supported by the certain elements within the military establishment in Pakistan. Raza Rumi believes that the role of military is not to define the society, but to defend it. Due to this reason, the state and nation building purpose is ignored by successive military dictators. Their perception about defence of the state is based on viewing India as a perpetual enemy. Due to this perspective certain elements within the military establishment are blamed to be supportive of some militant groups. Similarly, the intelligence agencies are reluctant to share their information with other departments including NACTA (Rumi, 2015).

Such kinds of policies on the part of the military are dangerous for the peace of the state in future. These days, the militants have got affiliations with much dangerous groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS. Farhan Zahid believes that the future of Pakistan will be secure only if all kinds of terrorist groups are rooted out the soil of Pakistan. These groups are out of control of the state agencies and institutions which may in turn make them more dangerous for the future and security of our state.

Apart from that, the problem of Baluchistan is taking the ugly turn. More and more actors are getting involved in these insurgencies. This problem must be managed by the state. "The grievances of Baloch people need to be properly addressed by the state". It is important to acknowledge our wrong policies which have further worsened the situation. Ejaz Haider says, "acknowledging our contribution to today's problems is an important start for course correction". The future can be secured only by not repeating our previous mistakes.

Critical Analysis

NIPS is the first comprehensive document devised under the civilian leadership to eradicate the menace of violent extremism and terrorism. It has nearly addressed all the factors that have a direct bearing on the internal stability of the country. The text was an answer to the so called holistic approach that the experts are advocating for governing in the scourge of militancy. The text has provided a long array of proposals that needs to be put into practice under the supervisions of NACTA.

NIPS is an unprecedented move in the sense that it came from the civilian leadership which was till now interpreted as the sole domain of the security establishment. The text provides for the coordination among various operational and intelligence agencies and to employ all the relevant entities along with the mobilization of the entire society to control this monster. This policy has rightly diagnosed the problems and prescribed quite

effective antidote. However, the policy is merely a paper work unless it is implemented in the letter and spirit. This is where the otherwise diligently drafted documents of internal security can go astray. The lead institution that was given the significant role in materializing this text was NACTA but unfortunately it was not made an effective and properly functioning institution. The meeting of its board of governor rarely takes place and Prime Minister usually prefers to stay away from its meetings. Similar is the status of the proposed Directorate of Intelligence which was to create the harmony and coordinate the activities of the different intelligence and operational activities. The reason is the existence of trust deficit between the civil and military institutions on the one hand and federal and provincial governments on the other.

The national security policy has failed to consider the low number of police personnel as is manifested by the study of Ahmad (2014). It said that "the total strength of Peshawar city police stands at 6000 while the experts suggest that 11000 is appropriate for the population of 6.7 million. Same problem is afflicting the Karachi city which has 26,667 personnel while the estimated requirement is 100,000.

Madrassah regulation and checking their role in fanning certain mindset conducive to the militants and their role in providing financial support to them in terms of fund raising on their behalf have not been heeded by the authorities. Azeem (2014) study has laid bare "the funding that terrorist organizations are getting from the madrasah of the twin cities." It is claimed that religious seminaries are serving the role of couriers for militant outfits. "Religious parties are also creating hurdles in bringing the madrassas in the mainstream education and are against the regularization".

"Pakistan still has covert relationship with some elements of the Taliban and has not shed its policy of employing them for achieving foreign policy objectives." According to Hussain (2015),certain elements in Pakistani military establishment still have the links with the Taliban. This policy thinking of the state institutions has come in the way of formulating a coherent and transparent policy vis-a-vis the militants. It has also given the anti-state militants the space to manoeuvre and hide among the favourite militants which are normally considered good Taliban. Though the NIPS was the initiative of the civilian government which was aimed to assert the civilian supremacy over the issue mainly taken as the military's domain but the policies that ensued the tragedy of Army Public School at Peshawar ended up bolstering the grip of the military establishment over security matters. The government's decision to set up the military court instead of strengthening the legal system and particularly the criminal justice system was a clear deviation from the recommendations proposed by the National Internal Security Policy. Ironically, NISP had correctly identified the redundancies existing in the security and intelligence agencies but suggested the creation of more institutions. Its perfect example is the creation of Rapid Response Force (RRF) on federal level while the existing Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) could be modified to perform all the tasks that had been assigned to RRF. This is a negative outgrowth of security apparatus and is an unnecessary financial burden on the national exchequer.

Another aspect that has been overlooked in the draft of NISP is the fact that every province has different nature of militancy that needs to be tackled respectively. For example, in Sindh, the law and order is bad mainly because of the urban terrorism due to the political patronage of the criminal bands by the major political parties on ethnic lines. Though the religious inspired terrorism does have its contributions in worsening the law and order situation, but the main contributory is the turf war between the major political forces of the province. Punjab has its own dynamics of terrorism which is mainly sectarian in nature. On the other hand, Baluchistan is witnessing the insurgency that is totally different from the one that is prevailed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa or FATA. In such situation, it is not sensible to have a uniform NISP for the entire country. The inputs of provincial governments while devising the NISP was not solicited. That's why a sweeping generalization has been resorted to while designing this policy.

Curriculum reforms is one of the major problems which must be addressed properly by the government. There is no agreement over developing curriculum especially at school level which should be inclusive in nature. The curriculum must not categorize people based on their interpretation of religion or sectarian lines. A general message of shared humanity must outshine in the textbooks of the country. Unfortunately, such an attempt by the previous governments has been reversed by the present religious parties especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Such a categorization makes our children extremists especially in their religious outlook. NISP did not address this problem effectively.

Terrorism is not only the outcome of anti-American resentment and Indian paranoia. It is more an indigenous problem having the local roots. It was not entirely the backlash of American invasion of Afghanistan as is portrayed by some people. Terrorism was present on Pakistani soil way before the event of 9/11. It was present because of the Jihadist policies of President General Zia-ul-Haq. However, it grew at alarming rate after the invasion of Afghanistan by the US and NATO forces.

The loophole in NISP could only be resolved through properly addressing the issues which are not discussed presently in the security policy. The think tanks must revise the security policy with proper feedback from different scholars and academics who are working on the problem of terrorism. In this regard, the provincial feedback and political consensus is of utmost importance. It also requires seriousness on the part of

federal government to implement NISP in its true sense. In such a way the desired fruits of NISP could be achieved and our land could be made further safe for its citizens.

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