



PIPS Policy Brief Counter-Violent Extremism

Working Group 10

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Internal security and challenges

Summary

- This brief summarizes the findings of the tenth working group's meeting on Counter-Violent Extremism (CVE), exploring how to address internal security challenges including those emanating from extremism.
- Pakistan faces a multitude of internal security challenges. The responses to the challenges are reactive and piecemeal, relying overwhelmingly on the exercise of force.
- There is a need to shape a consolidated internal security policy, which suggests the way forward on the challenges at the front of internal security. Members called for adopting institutional framework for dealing with internal security.
- The group, calling for de-militarization of security policy, referred to parliament and its committee to provide input on the policy.
- While militants have their 'vision' and they coordinate with each other, there is confusion on part of the state.
- Members argued that militants' "surrenders" in the wake of being surrounded by state forces are different from "reintegration" which should be conditioned on certain terms like acceptance of constitution, rejection of extreme notions, among others.
- The ideological sources of militants should be debunked too.
- There is a broad need for reforms within security institutions.

Group members (arranged alphabetically by last name)

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Background

On May 3, 2017, Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) convened meeting of the tenth working group on Counter-Violent Extremism (CVE), exploring how to address internal security challenges including those emanating from extremism.

This was last in a series of 10 planned meetings on CVE; below are summaries of the previous sessions:

- The first working group, which met on March 20, 2017, deliberated about the mechanism for shaping a religion-based narrative that counters those of extremists.
- The second group, which met on March 27, 2017, discussed the mechanism for reintegrating militants willing to shun violence and denounce *takfeer* (the practice of declaring fellow Muslims out of creed of Islam).
- The third group, meeting on April 3, 2017, pondered upon the need for a national dialogue to address critical politico-philosophical issues in the country, especially those producing extremism, and whether a revised social contract could provide answers.
- The fourth group, which met on April 10, 2017, discussed the implementing mechanism of National Action Plan, the country's counter-terror plan announced in January 2015.
- The fifth working group, meeting on April 17, 2017, brainstormed as to how extremism revolves around lack of equal status and physical services to all citizens. The group observed that on the one hand, areas excluded from the mainstream provide space to violent extremists, on the other hand, they often target religious minorities, an excluded group.
- The sixth working group, meeting on April 18, 2017, exploring the way youth are being radicalized in the country, and what can be done in the first place that they don't fall for extremist provocations.
- The seventh working group, meeting on April 24, 2017, explored the way in which media can be engaged to counter extremism.
- The eighth working group, meeting on April 25, 2017, suggested opening up cultural spaces to curb narrow extremist thoughts.
- The ninth working group, which met on May 2, 2017, explored how education can reformed to tame extremism.

The themes of these working-group meetings are largely driven from the CVE model PIPS proposed in 2016. A group of scholars, experts, and practitioners had, in a series of meetings, brainstormed over different components of a Pakistan-specific CVE model, one of them being engaging the youth.

Group members (continued)

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This meeting was convened to discuss the internal security challenges confronting Pakistan and how to address them. The group was told that the cabinet had once, in 2014, announced National Internal Security Policy, which will expire in 2018. Little was known about the achievement of that policy. More so because the National Action Plan, the country's counter terrorism plan, which was announced in early 2015 overrode other policies. Yet, as one of the previous consultations show, NAP itself was largely a counter-terror plan, ignoring strategies of dealing with violent extremism. Also, the country's varied internal security is not all emanating from terror plan. The meeting of tenth working group discussed how to deal with those challenges.

Key considerations

- The group agreed that Pakistan faces a multitude of internal security challenges. Terrorism by Islamist militants is the most serious one. Within the Islamists, there are those who can be reintegrated and those who the state has to fight till the end. Motivations of these militants often revolve around ideology; yet certain enabling environment ranging from lack of the state's writ to duplicitous security policy, end up providing space to the militants. Then, there are Baloch insurgents, who are usually engaged in low-intensity war in Balochistan. All the missing persons, a member noted, are seen as separatists, asking if that is so.

A member argued that the eventual heartland of militancy in Pakistan is Punjab. All kinds of militant groups reside there; the province is bastion of militant ideologies in specific.

- The group argued the responses to these threats have usually been reactive and piecemeal. A terrorist attack is usually followed by crackdown on ground or bombardment from air. There have been several assurances of "breaking the back" of the militants, which were broken by the re-emergence of militants in new form, carrying out another series of attacks.

Because the state's response against militants is indeed response to militant attacks, it overwhelmingly exercises force. The reliance on hard approach was discussed in previous consultations too: the military, which shall be the "final punch", is used as first line of defense; even when military is not involved, the approach of civilian law-enforcement agencies is "kill or capture."

At the same time, one member argued, overt militarization has resulted into security checks, which a common man is fed up with.

- Members called for adopting institutional framework for dealing with internal security. This framework should deal with all sorts of challenges. One member called for upholding in the three S's in the internal security: security, sovereignty, and stability.
- Members also called for drafting a specific policy against terrorism. Whatever we have against terrorism is ad-hoc, based on paper. The group called for shaping key ingredients of security policy and then identifying corresponding institutes to take those points. The group, calling for de-militarization of security policy, referred to parliament and its committee to provide input on the policy. The group argued that military should be the final punch against militancy, not the first line of defence. The first ones should be the different civilian security bodies like CTD, police, among others. Even in Karachi, the group suggested, the police should be in the lead.
- The group discussed the criteria of banning and unbanning individuals or putting them in the Fourth Schedule.

It was shared that action is taken on the decision from different intelligence agencies namely Special Branch, ISI, and IB. As of now, there are 8,300 people in Schedule 4. Another said while interior ministry proscribes organization, because the procedure involves intelligence, practically, it is the military that decides.

Members noted that once put on the Fourth Schedule, individuals, are stigmatized forever, even after having been removed from the list.

- Members argued that clarity of state policy is critical in fighting militancy. While militants have their 'vision' and they coordinate with each other, there is confusion on part of the state. Even now, policymakers are accused of retaining the distinction between "good and bad Taliban". A member warned that the so-called good militants of today could transform into bad militants tomorrow.

Somehow, the members noted militancy is still linked to foreign policy. They called for revising Afghan policy, responsible for producing militancy in the current times. Governance should be fixed, one said. Another participant argued that we should realize that in today's inter-connected world, "geo-economics is more important than geo-politics." There are "no absolutes", he said.

- The members advised that the state should have the sole monopoly on the use of violence. To make sustainable all the counter-terror initiatives, the group recalled for strengthening education and providing economic justice.

- A member called for exploring how faith-based laws are producing new tensions. One of these is the blasphemy law; debate on the subject is hijacked by some groups who don't allow others to even talk about it.

The group underscored that the publications of proscribed outfits are still available online. These should be banned, evolving some sort of mechanism.

Another member called for checking the black money pumping into the coffer of militants.

A member said that while the foreign office released a list of 171 proscribed outfits, the interior minister has been dealing with 62 banned outfits. Why is this gap?

The group warned of radicalization sweeping in a broad segment of society, including among judges, students, and even parliamentarians.

- The group also debated if reintegration of militants is the right policy. Some argued that those who took arms against the state should not be embraced; others argued that "surrender" in the wake of being surrounded by state forces is different than "reintegration" which should be conditioned on certain terms like acceptance of constitution, rejection of extreme notions, among others.
- The group was warned of the urgency of dealing with the menace of terrorism. A member said that while the US is far away, and can somewhat afford the presence of militants in this part of the world, countries like Russia and China cannot; they are situated right in this region.
- Members called for shaping a consolidated policy and then continuing with it, rather than putting all the trust and expectation from one leader. Members noted accountability deficit in the whole structure, especially higher echelons.
- The group argued that many innocent people have suffered in the name of counter-terror drive. Many people are denied rent, merely on suspicion of being from other part of the country. Participants shared several stories to this end.

Similarly, it was noted the existing anti-terror laws have even been invoked against agitators in Islamabad's slum area. More so, even those have shunned violence are nabbed in fresh drive.

- A member argued that ideological sources of militants should be debunked too. In this on-going drive against militancy, according to state, more than 28,000 militants have died. This, a participant said, is a huge number. Still, the country is facing militant threat. This fact calls for addressing the ideological source.
- A variety of other responses with the same effect – of neutralizing militants – is missing. The prevailing trend puts a lid on the militant effusion for a while,

but the products continue to be producing. Similarly, there is diversity within the internal security challenges the country face:

- Extremism is not necessarily militancy or terrorism, but they can feed one another. Dealing with an extremist is different than dealing with a militant, though both pose security threat to the people.
- Blurring militancy with organized crime is wrong, though there can be areas where criminals and militants cooperate. Various other shades need to be explored.
- Baloch secessionists are mostly engaged in low-intensity war, and the solution, as the National Action Plan endorses, is in political reconciliation, which shall be expedited.
- A lot of recent tensions emanate along the border. Pakistan even blames Afghanistan for not stopping the excursions of militants from its soil.
- Extremists target marginalized communities like Christians, driving sympathy from elements of society already radicalized against non-Muslims.
- Extremists find spaces in ungoverned areas like FATA.

Recommendations

- The entire approach and vision of the internal security shall be revised, moving beyond the reactive response to any militant attack.
 - The new approach should adopt some sort of conceptual framework to produce internal security policy, the key ingredients of which shall counter extremism, militancy, and organized crimes; curb separatist tendencies; warn about the internal fallout of strategic priorities; govern cyber spaces; and secure the country's borders.
 - The revised framework shall even incorporate elements from human security.
 - Internal security policy shall incorporate key counter-terror initiatives like National Action Plan, though after revising it first.
- Parliament shall take lead in overseeing internal security policy
 - Parliamentary committee on national security shall, among other things, re-assess strategic priorities and mainstream marginalized areas and community.
- There is a broad need for reforms within security institutions.
 - They shall be made to coordinate with each other, bringing in some sort of accountability mechanisms in case of any lapse.
 - Threat perceptions of the security institutions be reviewed.
 - Civilian law-enforcement agencies shall take the lead in any drive against militancy.

Table: Working table on recommendations and implementation mechanism on “Internal security and challenges”

Recommendations	Implementation mechanism
<p><i>Vision and approaches of internal security should be revisited</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceptual framework for Internal Security Policy (ISP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Extremism ○ Militancy ○ Organized crime ○ Separatist tendencies ○ Linking internal security with strategic priorities ○ Cyber governance ○ Border security • Human security • Accurate threat perception of institutions • Partnership state and citizen 	<p>Formation/activation of parliamentary committee/s (on security) to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Re-assess strategic priorities ○ Mainstream marginalized areas and communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A revised NAP be made integral part of ISP • Process of reintegration with Baloch separatists; political mainstreaming of Balochistan • Fundamental rights should not be comprised in Internal Security Policy • Ensuring effective implementation of rule of law (Rule of Law approach) and effective measures to stop misuse of authority
<p><i>Policy measures/administrative measures</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countering urban terrorism ... framework required • Capacity building • Improving coordination among institutes/removing accountability deficits among security institutions • Reforms needed in internal security institutions including police • Discourage parallel institutionalization
<p><i>Justice and Governance</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reforming judicial system in line with national priorities • Discourage religious and non-religious pressure groups.

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