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Counter-Terrorism Policies of Pakistan: Successes and Challenges (2014–2025)

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Abstract
The success and challenges of the Counter TERRORISM Framework in Pakistan and General overall assessment of the framework. Introduction The present counter terrorism strategy of Pakistan has been framed since the gruesome attack on December 16, 2014 on Army Public School (APS) in Peshawar. Over 140 innocent schoolchildren were killed in the attack, which also injured over 1,000 others. It highlighted the gravity of the threat from the terrorists and the need for a national approach. This prompted the Government to come up with the 20-point National Action Plan (NAP) that was approved by Parliament on 24 December 2014. The goal of this plan was to wipe out the concept of terrorism and extremism by military, political, legal and administrative means. It highlighted the need of the regulation of religious seminaries, control of hate speech, prevention of financing of terrorism and judicial reforms. It also emphasized to boost the coordination between security institutions via the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA).

Module 1: Introduction to Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in Pakistan

The framework marked a significant progress towards a national counter-terrorism strategy (Dawn, 2024). Operation Zarb-e-Azb was one of the most important counter-terror measures in Pakistan, which was launched in North Waziristan in June 2014. The operation was directed against militant groups based in the tribal areas, especially those which plan attacks from there. Several militant hideouts were broken up, terrorist infrastructure destroyed and many militants neutralized by security forces. It also caused a loss of operational ability to key terrorist groups. Moreover, the operation helped re-establish State authority where it had not been effective before. The campaign reportedly resulted in the deaths and capture of thousands of militants. The operation did displace a few local people, but it did prove to be very effective in reducing the power of the militants. Zarb-e-Azb as such marked a significant step in the

military action against terrorism and extremism in Pakistan. Pakistan has initiated a military operation named Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad in February 2017 to consolidate the success of the previous military operations. Radd-ul-Fasaad was a nationwide operation, unlike Zarb-e-Azb that was concerned mainly with militant strongholds in the tribal areas. It included intelligence related activities, along with measures taken for border security and to deal with remaining militant networks.

The operation also targeted the extremist elements in urban and rural areas. These activities involved security forces, intelligence agencies, police and other institutionalized security personnel. Its main purpose was to stop the reorganisation of terrorist groups once they had lost their trading bases. The operations brought about substantial gains in the security situation in Pakistan. Terrorism-related deaths dropped by close to 83 percent between 2013 and 2018, and the number of deaths annually dropped to fewer than 600 in 2020 from an excess of 4,500 in 2013 (DLP Forum, 2025; HowTests, 2024). Several legal and administrative steps were also taken in Pakistan to enhance judicial action against terrorism. The use of special anti-terrorism courts and an increase in the size of military courts helped speed prosecutions of terrorism-related cases. These institutions were able to speed up the processing of some cases in the mid-2010s. The government also acted on extremist publications, groups and individuals who were inciting to violence. Limitations on groups engaged in sectarian hatred and extremist propaganda. But the impact of these measures differed by region.

There were continuing problems relating to weak investigations and inadequate forensic capabilities, as well as delays in prosecution. However, while financial and legal measures did make some headway, continued implementation and institutional capacity were needed for long-term effectiveness. Ongoing problems in the implementation of the National Action Plan Notwithstanding these achievements, Pakistan experienced significant challenges in putting the non-military elements of the National Action Plan into place. There was significant attention given to the military operations, and to a lesser extent, to education, governance, and social development reforms. The control of madrassas was still incomplete, in terms of both registering and monitoring them, transparency of their finances, and uniformity of their educational programs. Likewise, there was no uniform and country-wide action to stop hate speech and extremist propaganda. Lack of coordination between the federal and provincial governments also hindered the effectiveness of the national counter-terrorism framework. The updated National Action Plan for 2021 trimmed down the original plan to 14 points and tried to rectify some of its drawbacks. But, application was not uniform. The aforementioned weaknesses showed that military measures were not enough to eradicate the underlying factors behind terrorism (Dawn, 2024; The News, 2025). The judiciary system also suffered severe difficulties in response to cases of terrorism. In 2024-2025, thousands of anti-terrorism-related cases were pending in anti-terrorism courts. The justice system was hampered by delays in investigations, the lack of forensic facilities, issues with witnesses, and shortcomings in prosecution. In several instances the police were unable to gather enough evidence to convict.

There were also changes in government priorities and political instability that impacted the continuity of counter-terrorism policies. What's more, civilian institutions did not have the resources or administrative capacity to deal with reforms effectively. Consequently the achievement of some of the objectives of NAP was incomplete. The institutional weaknesses gave opportunities to the extremist

groups to re-organise and take advantage of administrative gaps. Thus, it is still important to enhance the efficiency of civilian institutions and judiciary, which can help in building a sustainable counter-terrorism framework (The News, 2025). Increased incidents of acts of terror since 2021. Operation Azm-e-Istehkam, Recent Developments. In light of the new wave of terrorism, Pakistan launched Operation Azm-e-Istehkam in 2024. The objective of the initiative was to enhance the National Action Plan by better intelligence sharing, joint security efforts and better efforts to respond to terrorist networks. It aimed to build on the weaknesses of past counter-terrorism efforts, with a focus on a national approach to counter-terrorism. Cooperation among the federal and province governments, security institutions and intelligence services was also emphasized. Its overall goal was to keep militant groups from regaining their powers. Initial developments suggested temporary improvements in the security situation in certain areas. But the ongoing deployment of militant groups showed that the overall threat still existed. Thus, it is important to ensure that the operation is implemented and coordinated with the institutions involved, consistent over time, in order to achieve long-term success (ISSRA, 2025). A summary of the entire assessment and recommendations.

Module 2: Post-APS Attack and the Emergence of a National Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2014–2015)

The militants of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) attacked the Army Public School (APS) in Peshawar on 16 December 2014. In the ensuing several hours, gunmen methodically murdered students and staff. Official death tolls put the number of casualties at about 145-150, including around 132 children, one of the worst attacks on a school in modern history (New York Times, 2014; Britannica, 2017). The attack was said to be in response to military activities in North Waziristan. The deliberate targeting of children caused unparalleled national horror and grief. The massacre resulted in a rare national political consensus against terrorism. Largely, political parties which had previously split on negotiations with militants gave them their backs. The uproar crossed the traditional barriers of civil-military and partisan divisions. The leadership was able to agree a comprehensive response within eight days of an All Parties Conference (APC) being convened (Dawn, 2024; DLP Forum, 2025). Parliament on 24 December 2014 adopted the 20-point National Action Plan (NAP) for Countering Terrorism and Extremism. It was announced by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in his televised address, which he termed as a "defining moment" for Pakistan (NACTA, 2014; Tribune, 2014).

The plan was quickly developed by the Ministry of Interior and NACTA with the participation of stakeholders and following the previous National Internal Security Policy of 2014. The major components of NAP were a mix of kinetic and non-kinetic measures. Some of the key points included were: introduction of death sentences for conviction of terrorism; establishment of special trial courts operated under military security for two years; ban on militant outfits and armed gangs; strengthening of NACTA; action against hate literature and sectarian propaganda; thwarting of terror financing, preventing re-emergence of proscribed organisations, creation of a dedicated counter-terrorism force, protection against religious persecution, registration and regulation of religious seminaries (madrassas), ban on glorification of terrorists in the media, administrative and development reforms in the former FATA with priority given to the return of internally displaced persons, dismantling of terrorist communication networks, measures against the abuse of internet and social media and zero tolerance for militancy in Punjab (NACTA, 2014; SATP, n.d.).

The formal consensus and legislative support was provided by political leadership. The military establishment was already in operation in the context of Operation Zarb-e-Azb and provided operational capacity, and later assisted the temporary military courts. Pressure for action and the national will were increased by civil society, the media and the public. Implementing mechanisms were in the form of an umbrella committee chaired by the Prime Minister and several ministerial and provincial apex committees for coordination between the federal and provincial governments (Dawn, 2014). The APS attack thus made a change in the Pakistan's strategy from disjointed and reactive responses into a first broadly accepted national counter-terrorism strategy. NAP formed a unified framework tying together military action with legal, financial, regulatory and ideological means, and institutionalizing a coordinated response of the state over the next several years.

Module 3: National Action Plan (NAP): Objectives and Implementation

On 24 December 2014, the National Action Plan (NAP) was approved by Parliament, which was Pakistan's first comprehensive, multi-domain counter-terrorism plan. Its 20 points included measures that were both short-term and long-term counter-extremism policies. Key priorities were the dismantling of terrorist organisations and armed groups, the blocking of financial sources, the regulation of religious seminaries, the blocking of hate speech, the institutional strengthening and the reform of the criminal justice system (National Counter Terrorism Authority [NACTA], 2014). The fight against organizations and counter-terrorism. NAP insisted on the prohibition of militant organisations and armed gangs and the non-reappearance of proscribed organisations under any guise. In The Tribal Area, military operations like Zarb-e-Azb and later Radd-ul-Fasaad destroyed large infrastructure establishments, both in urban areas and the tribes. The establishment of special trial courts under military supervision (for a temporary period of two years, later extended) to speed up prosecutions and the return of the death penalty for terrorism convicted was also reintroduced. Addressing hate speech, extremist texts and media glorification Literature, newspapers and media were singled out for condemning literature and journalists who spread hatred, sectarianism and celebrated the terror of terrorists. Some extremist publications were banned and restrictions were put in place on the public glorification of militants. Restrictions on the use of the Internet and social media were also put in place, but their application was limited. Religious seminaries (madrassas) are regulated. Registration and regulation of madrassas was a core non-kinetic part.

The aim was to place seminaries under state control, to have uniform curricula, and to control the funds. There was limited progress: on the one hand, registration drives were promoted, on the other, there was strong opposition from religious groups to curriculum reform and an inadequate coordination of the provinces (DLP Forum, 2025; New York Times, 2025). Countering terrorist financing NAP focused on curtailing financial transactions to terrorists. Pakistan established task forces, beefed up banking supervision, and added to the list of proscribed persons. The efforts assisted Pakistan to get off the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) grey list in October 2022. The number of account freezes and designations increased over the next few years (ISSRA 2025). Building capacity in NACTA and provincial CTDs NACTA was named the coordinating agency for the monitoring of NAP. Additional equipment, training and operational focus were given to Provincial Counter-Terrorism Departments (CTDs). Progress was relatively good in capacity building of CTDs, while NACTA still had issues with resources, staffing,

and inter-agency coordination (Dawn, 2024). Expansion of the criminal justice system and prosecution efforts Special courts were to be established, follow-up of the terrorism cases to conclusion and reforms in the general criminal justice system were required. Convictions were made in temporary military courts during the mid-2010s, followed by an increase of backlogs in civilian courts. As of the end of 2024, thousands of cases of anti terrorism cases were pending, and the execution rate dropped down after the initial phase (Pakistan Connect, 2025). Difficulties in implementation and institutional coordination. Non-kinetic measures were plagued by low political ownership, shortcomings in federal–provincial relationships, inadequate support for NACTA, opposition to madrassa reforms and enforcement inconsistencies in hate speech and financing regulations. Apex committees were the primary coordination bodies while the monitoring committees at ministerial level failed to work effectively. In addition to this, there was policy discontinuity between governments which also contributed to the lack of sustained implementation (Dawn, 2024; The News, 2025). Recognizing gaps from earlier, the plan has been revised into a more streamlined 14-point framework, separating the kinetic and non-kinetic domains of the plan, in 2021. In sum, NAP developed a vital national structure, but it failed to have a long-term impact on terrorism and extremism because of the lack of institutional coordination and execution.

Module 4: Military Operations and Security-Based Counter-Terrorism Policies

Since 2014, Pakistan's policy of counter-terrorism was focused on large-scale military campaigns, intelligence-led operations and the coordination between different agencies. These operations targeted to eliminate the militants' infrastructure, re-establish State authority and minimise the terrorist capability of the nation had a countrywide effect. Operation Zarb-e-Azb (2014) The operation Zarb-e-Azb was launched on 15 June 2014 against the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), foreign militants and associated groups in North Waziristan. It involved up to 30,000 troops, captured significant strongholds like Miranshah and Mir Ali, and destroyed hundreds of hideouts, recovered thousands of weapons and explosives, and eliminated several thousand militants (Jamestown Foundation, 2015; Wikipedia, n.d.). The operation brought an end to a situation whereby areas had been acting as militant sanctuaries for years and had helped to reduce the level of terrorist attacks across the country over the next few years. Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad (2017) On 22nd February 2017, the military started Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad to consolidate the previous victories and to eliminate the remaining threats in Pakistan. While the Zarb-e-Azb was more focused on high-intensity clearance operations, it focused on intelligence-based operations (IBOs) nationwide, urban cell disruption, and border management. By the beginning of the decade, security forces had carried out tens of thousands of IBOs, recovered large caches of weapons, arrested thousands of suspects and set up joint check posts (Dawn, 2020; The News, 2020).

The operation also helped in the fencing of the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan to curtail the movement of militants across the border. Intelligence based operations & institutional functions IBOs were made the primary tactic during Radd-ul-Fasaad. These were based on intelligence gathered by the military intelligence (ISI, Military Intelligence), intelligence civilian agencies, provincial Counter-Terrorism Departments (CTDs), police, Rangers and Frontier Corps. The Pakistan Armed Forces led in all aspects, special forces and kinetic capacity. In urban centres like Karachi, it was the duty of the Rangers and in border areas and Balochistan, it was the duty of the Frontier Corps. Local police and CTDs have

done local raids and investigations, with enhanced inter-agency coordination compared to previous periods (Command Eleven, 2025). Re-establishment of a state with the reconstruction of the FATA as well as IDP rehabilitation. Through Zarb-e-Azb and later on, the process of state's gradual encroachment in the territory of former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) was made easier. Clearance was followed by infrastructure projects, roads and administrative changes.

This was formalized in 2018 when FATA was merged into the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. In North Waziristan alone, almost one million people were displaced. The majority of IDPs returned through the government/military towards the end of 2014, with delays and humanitarian challenges in the process (ReliefWeb, 2014; ISPR reports). Achievements and limitations The results in terms of security were tangible; namely, the number of terrorist deaths was reduced by significant margins in 2014-2019 and major networks were broken, as well as a return to greater normalcy in many urban areas. Challenges included temporary displacement of large numbers of civilians, not meeting social and economic needs in cleared areas, and the failure to prevent the movement of militants across the Afghan border. The failures in these areas led to the later re-emergence of groups like the TTP, therefore, kinetic gains were not enough to make groups permanent, and a continuous civilian governance and a cross-border cooperation were needed to achieve this (Critical Threats, 2017; DLP Forum, 2025). In all, military operations of the last 4 years (2014-2017) have been the backbone of Pakistan's counter-terrorism efforts and have resulted in territorial control and pressure on militants, highlighting the need for complementary political and developmental strategies.

Module 5: Institutional and Legal Framework for Counter-Terrorism

The institutional and legal structure of counter-terrorism in Pakistan is based on specialized agencies, dedicated laws and special courts to handle kinetic and non-kinetic threats. National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) NACTA was founded administratively in 2008 and became statutorily in the NACTA Act, 2013. It is a body corporate with a Board of Governors and its primary functions are to collate and share intelligence, to prepare national counter-terrorism and counter-extremism strategies, to develop action plans, to undertake research, to review laws and to coordinate among stakeholders (NACTA, 2013). Increased NACTA capacity was a focus for the 2014 National Action Plan, but capacity and inter-agency issues have hampered its full potential. Key legislation The Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA), 1997 is the major substantive legislation. It is a definition of terrorist acts, special procedure and the formation of Anti-Terrorism Courts (ATC) for the speedy trial of scheduled offences. It has been expanded, over the years, to include amendments. The Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016 covers cyber threats in relation to terrorism such as cyber terrorism, online glorification of terrorism, hate speech and funding recruitment and terrorism through information systems (Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016). CTDs and ATCs for each province.CTDs and ATCs for provinces. The provincial-based police forces have operational wings called Provincial Counter-Terrorism Departments (CTDs) for investigation, intelligence and raids against the terrorist networks. ATA has set up Anti-Terrorism Courts with exclusive jurisdiction on scheduled terrorism offences and also fast track trials, however, the courts are still facing backslogs and difficulties with evidence. Sharing and coordinating information and expertise. Coordination is essential between military intelligence (ISI, Military Intelligence), the Intelligence Bureau, provincial CTDs, police, Rangers, and NACTA in order to properly respond. While there is progress in information

sharing through fusion centres and joint mechanisms, the real-time sharing of information and trust in institutions continue to be a recurring challenge. Legal proceedings, human rights and rule of law Special laws and courts have allowed for more speedy action, but raised concerns about due process, extended detentions, vague definitions of terrorism, and limitations on expression under PECA. The tension between security considerations and constitutional rights and the standards of fair trials remain to influence debates on the legitimacy and sustainability of the legal framework. Module

Module 6: Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)

The De-Radicalization Multiple interrelated factors underlie violent extremism in Pakistan. These range from narratives of ideology and religion that support violence, grievances politically, socioeconomic exclusion, weak government and the politicisation and manipulation of local conflicts by militant groups. Vulnerability is also heightened by poverty, limited opportunities for education and employment and exposure to intolerant discourse in some educational and/or online environments, especially among youth (Basit, 2015; Arab News, 2025). Religious, ideological, political and socioeconomic aspects. Often, radicalization process is a mix of selective religious interpretations and political narratives against the state or foreign powers. The social and economic marginalisation in conflict-prone areas like the former tribal districts and in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have fostered fertile ground for recruitment. Extremists have taken to the web, using online platforms to make quick use of propaganda and recruitment resources. The National Counter Violent Extremism / Prevention of Violent Extremism Policy was established.A National Counter Violent Extremism / Prevention of Violent Extremism Policy was created. Pakistan has slowly evolved non-kinetic structures. The National Internal Security Policy and the National Prevention of Violent Extremism (NPVE) Policy (2024-2025) focus on a “5R” strategy – Revisit, Reach Out, Reduce risk, Reinforce resilience, and Reintegrate (Nation, 2025; Al Jazeera, 2025).

Module 7: Counter-Terrorism Financing and International Obligations

In Pakistan, terrorist financing has always had many sources such as donations (sometimes disguised as charity), hawala/hundi informal banking systems, proceeds of crime, movement of funds across the border and, occasionally, misappropriation of funds raised through non-profit organizations. These mechanisms allow groups to continue their activities, recruiters, and propagandists. Financial monitoring and financial regulatory framework Pakistan has put in place a well-defined Anti-Money Laundering and Counter Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) system based on the Anti-Money Laundering Act, 2010 (as amended). Banks and other designated non-financial businesses must submit Currency Transaction Reports (CTRs) and Suspicious Transaction Reports (STRs). It is monitored by the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan, the State Bank of Pakistan and other regulators. Role of the Financial Monitoring Unit (FMU) The FMU, created under AML framework, is Pakistan's financial intelligence unit. It gathers, processes and provides STRs and CTRs to law-enforcement and supervisory authorities. The unit is also engaged in cooperation with foreign financial intelligence units and strategic analysis of risks of money-laundering and terrorist financing (Financial Monitoring Unit, n.d.). The FATF and Pakistan have come out of the grey list. In June 2018, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) added Pakistan to its list of jurisdictions under enhanced monitoring (grey list) because of strategic weaknesses in AML/CFT. Pakistan has finished two action plans (34 points) under the technical part of compliance and effectiveness. In October 2022, the FATF Plenary in Paris, by consensus, lifted Pakistan from the grey list

after it had implemented the actions required to resolve the issues highlighted in the report and agreed with Pakistan's voluntary withdrawal. (Dawn, 2022; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022)

The freezing of assets and other issues Authorities broadened the proscribed list and the related accounts and assets, and enhanced targeted financial sanctions. However, the situation is complex including the informal economy, residual reliance on alternative remittance mechanisms, capacity of investigation and prosecution of sophisticated financing structures and the need for continuous effectiveness monitoring beyond compliance. In this module, students will study the regional and international dimensions of Pakistan's counter-terrorism policy.In this module, students will learn the aspects of Pakistan's counter-terrorism policy from the regional and international perspectives. Regional dynamics, especially Pakistan–Afghanistan ties, as well as ties with major powers and international organizations, affect Pakistan's counter-terrorism efforts significantly. Relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan and cross-border terrorism. Movement of militants has always been easy along the porous border. In August 2021, following the return of the Afghan Taliban to the power in Kabul, Pakistan expected more cooperation in security. Rather, the cross-border terrorism has been growing. There was a major resurgence in the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) which launched many attacks within the borders of Pakistan particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA. Safe havens and operational space provided by Pakistani authorities and independent evaluations, such as UN monitoring reports, have been blamed for this surge by the TTP in Afghanistan (Dawn, 2026; Crisis Group, 2026). Tensions have flared between Islamabad and Kabul as both claim responsibility for each other's actions, fence posts have been erected, and in some instances, attacks have been conducted by military forces. Threats by ISIS-K and other groups of militants. The Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISIS-K or ISKP) continues to be a threat in the area, challenging the Afghan Taliban and the Pakistani government. Its capability inside Pakistan remains more restricted than that of the TTP, but it has been responsible for high-profile attacks and has been a part of the complex militant scene. China's interests and the Pakistani security forces have also been targeted by other groups, such as Baloch separatist groups. The Pakistan–China security cooperation and CPEC. Security of the CPEC is a bilateral priority. China and Pakistan have strengthened cooperation in counter-terrorism in terms of intelligence exchange, joint exercises, training and safeguarding of Chinese personnel and projects. Pakistan has specific security measures in place for CPEC, and both have stressed on a “zero tolerance” policy towards terrorism and demanded measures against those operating from Afghan soil (Geo News, 2026; Diplomatic Insight, 2026). Involvement with the United States and international organizations Since the time of the most intense cooperation between Pakistan and the United States following the September 11 attacks, the relationship between the two has been changing. Intelligence and operational links are ongoing in certain areas, but strategic differences and a decreased U.S. military presence in the region have changed the level of engagement. Pakistan also cooperates with the United Nations, including sanctions regimes, monitoring teams and counter-terrorism capacity-building programs, and joins organizations like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Regional security dynamics Pakistan's security scenario remains complex due to geopolitical competition, legacy of the Afghan conflict, and regional rivalries. Effective border management, credible action against cross-border sanctuaries, and continued multilateral involvement and domestic kinetic and non-kinetic action are needed for sustainable progress.

The Revised National Action Plan (2021) and Emerging Security Challenges are revisited in this module. The National Action Plan (NAP) of December 2014, with its initial 20-point consensus framework, was put in place following the Army Public School attack. In 2021, due to the country's security climate, especially the return of Afghanistan's Taliban to power and the subsequent surge in militancy, a review is needed. The National Action Plan (2021) revised the original 22-point plan into 14-point plan and clearly differentiated between the kinetic and non-kinetic domains (NACTA, 2021; Dawn, 2021). There is a possibility of transformation into the

13-point framework.

1. The National Counter Terrorism Authority says the new NAP prioritises them in this way: Kinetic domain Intolerance of militancy – no armed or identified criminal gangs are allowed to operate.

2. Combating terrorism in media (electronic, print and social), communication and cyber networks

3. Effective measures against religious/sectarian persecution and terrorism.

4. Choking of terror financing and measures against proscribed organisations.

5. Controlling illegal operation relating to narcotics, arms and human trafficking. Non-kinetic domain 7. Implementation of anti-terrorism laws in courts to a final decision.

6. Capacities Building and strengthening of provincial Counter-Terrorism Departments (CTDs).

7. Development, institutionalization and implementation of a Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) policy.

8. Control and enlistment of religious seminaries (madaris).

9. Balochistan reconciliation process.

10. Reform in the United areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (award of NFC, capacity development of LEA, local government elections, land reform).

11. Improvements in the criminal justice system.

12. Legislation and law on espionage and subversion. Afghan refugees' repatriation and management of associated issues (NACTA 2021).

13.The principal focus for key measures.

The updated plan emphasizes the need to improve the capabilities of provincial CTDs through enhanced equipment, training and inter-agency collaboration. It builds on its work to address sectarian violence and religious persecution and focuses on criminal justice reform to enhance investigation, prosecution and trial results. Highlighted non-kinetic pillars are follow-on of pending terror cases and adoption of a coherent CVE policy. Whereas implementation gaps and limitations should be taken into account. Though the structure seems to be clearer, the implementation is still inconsistent. The coordination between the federal and provincial governments is inadequate, there is a lack of political ownership, civil society is under-resourced, and progress on the issues of madrassa regulation, criminal justice and reconciliation in Balochistan remains incomplete. The implementation of the revised framework came under severe strain in 2025 when the resurgence of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (ISSRA, 2025; Dawn, 2024) posed fresh challenges of emerging cross-border and hybrid threats.

The revision was, on balance, an effort to tailor NAP to a new security landscape through a combination of kinetic pressure and institutional, legal and societal action, in 2021. It requires sustained implementation, building up of institutional capacity of the civil population, and good inter-provincial and inter-agency coordination. The collapse of the ceasefire of the TTP and escalating violence.Violence,

collapse of ceasefire of TTP. In late 2021 and mid-2022, the Pakistani government held discussions with TTP members, brokered by the Afghan Taliban. A temporary halt to fighting was declared, but was short-lived. The TTP broke the truce in November 2022, launching attacks once again (Arab News, 2022; Diplomat, 2022). The split resulted in more militant violence. The data from independent monitoring sources demonstrates a clear increase – that there are more incidents and deaths from terrorism than in the period before 2021 and that this increase is in both 2022 and 2023 (PICSS, 2024; PIPS, 2024). Severe attacks occur in a geographic area.Heavy attacks are concentrated in geographical location.

The TTP activity was concentrated in the newly merged districts (former FATA) and the southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province like Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan and North and South Waziristan. Balochistan at the same time was under the pressure of heightened militancy activities of Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and other Baloch militant groups, as well as some continued activities of other militants. These two provinces combined had the vast majority of the recorded attacks in 2022-2023 (Al Jazeera, 2023). Difficulties for law enforcement and the state The provincial police and Counter-Terrorism Departments (CTDs) were put under pressure. Regular ambushes, suicides, and police station and checkpoint attacks highlighted capacity and resource limitations. Institutional capacity was limited by the widespread and large nature of the violence, which was met by responses from security forces based on intelligence and targeted actions. The combined districts still faced governance and security problems, making it difficult to centralize power. The political and economic situation. The state's efforts to maintain broad counter-terrorism measures were also hampered by domestic political uncertainty and a worsening economic situation in 2022-2023. Police and development in conflict affected areas, and non-kinetic programs received limited resources as a result of fiscal pressures. Continuity in policy implementation and civil-military coordination was also affected by political polarization. Evaluation of how effectively responses are performed. The counter-terrorism strategy of Pakistan in this period was more kinetic – based on military and intelligence operations. Security forces also killed some militants and disrupted some networks, but failed to change the overall pattern of the attacks in the upward direction.

The response was constrained by limited effectiveness due to cross-border sanctuaries in Afghanistan, lack of progress on non-kinetic measures within the revised National Action Plan, and political-economic pressure within the country (Basit, 2024; PICSS, 2024). In this way, the years of 2022-2023 emphasized the resilience of the militant groups as well as the ongoing structural problems in Pakistan's counter-terrorism framework. Module 11 – Future prospects and policy recommendations The experiences of counter terror from 2014 onwards in Pakistan shows some clear kinetic successes and structural weaknesses. While the military operations resulted in a division of the militant groups' territorial control and a decrease in overall violence during the following few years, the resurgence of militant groups since 2021 Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and persistent instability in Balochistan — raise questions about the effectiveness of a security-focused strategy. A long-term, all-encompassing national counter-terrorism policy is needed that combines kinetic, non-kinetic, institutional and developmental approaches for sustainable progress. Widely applying the National Action Plan The original National Action Plan (2014) and the revised version (2021) (14-point plan) give good guidance but the implementation has been inconsistent. Going forward, there is a need for the use of clear KPIs,

independent monitoring regularly, improved federal–provincial collaboration, and continued political commitment from successive governments (NACTA, 2021; Dawn, 2024). Strengthening institutions NACTA should be given greater administrative and financial independence, analytical skills and a more precise coordinating role. The Provincial Counter-Terrorism Departments (CTDs) need regular investments in training, technology, forensic skills, and manpower. The key to transfer primary responsibility for internal security from the military to civilian police agencies is parallel reforms in the police, including modernization of investigation techniques, community policing and better working conditions. Criminal justice and the coordination of intelligence Sloppy prosecutions and delays do not deter. Specialized investigation units, witness protection, capacity building of prosecutors and judges, and timely disposal of terrorism cases should be a priority for reforms. There is a need to establish institutionalised mechanisms for intelligence sharing between military, civilian and provincial agencies (rather than ad hoc arrangements). Addressing root causes Vulnerabilities exist due to socio-economic inequalities, inadequate state services and governance gaps in newly created districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Security operations must be complemented by targeted development programmes; employment creation; land reform and health and educational reforms within the local government. Education systems and religious institutions must sensitively foster critical thinking, tolerance and inclusive citizenship through a proper control over religious seminaries and through the development of alternative narrative programmes and initiatives like Paigham-e-Pakistan. India's border management and regional relations Solid physical and technological management of the Afghan border is still essential. International dialogue with Kabul, regional partners and international organisations should focus on concrete and tangible steps towards the closure of cross-border sanctuaries without leading to any escalatory cycles. Coordination in security aspects with China in the context of CPEC should be sustained as well as continuing involvement in the multiple forums. Community-based and rights based approaches. There should be more community-based engagement, local peace, and rehabilitation-reintegration efforts for at-risk youth and ex-combatants, which should be professionalized and expanded. The sustainable security framework should be grounded in civilian leadership, rights, and accountability principles, while maintaining the focus on security requirements and constitutional protection and adherence to the rule of law. To conclude, Pakistan must rely on the consistent execution of existing counter-terrorism plans, institutional strengthening, socioeconomic integration, and sustainable civilian-led structure, which will take care of both the symptoms and causes of extremism and terrorism, rather than relying on more kinetic operations.

Conclusion

These policies are rooted in and based on education, community engagement, media and rehabilitation, not only military action. The consensus fatwa by about 1800 scholars of various Islamic schools of thought, Paigham-e-Pakistan (2018), offers a theological rebuttal to armed action against the state and the use of violence based on religious arguments (NACTA, n.d.; Modern Diplomacy, 2026). The role of the educational institutions, religious scholars and the madrassa reforms. CVE's mission is to drive Educational Reform. With the introduction of such curricular frameworks as the Single National Curriculum, there is an attempt to inculcate civil values, tolerance and critical thinking. Moderate interpretations are legitimated by religious scholars. Under the National Action Plan, the registration and

regulation of Madrassas will ensure that these institutions are regulated, allow for greater transparency of finances, and help to limit the space for extremist teaching. The progress has been uneven, as there has been resistance from some religious groups and poor provincial implementation (World Policy Hub, 2024; South Asia Times, 2026). Resisting extremist ideologies and radicalization online State and civil society initiatives encompass the message of Paigham-e-Pakistan, monitoring hate speech, and the ban on online glorification of terrorism as per the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act. Digital counter-narrative campaigns and reaching out to the media and social platforms are part of the plan of action, but capacity and consistency is still a challenge. Rehabilitation, reintegration and community engagement Post military clearance operations, Pakistan has implemented deradicalization and rehabilitation initiatives, such as Sabaoon (juveniles), Mishal and Rastoon in the Swat area. These centres provide religious counseling, psychological support, education, and vocational training to help with the reintegration of former militants and at-risk youth (Khan, 2024; Arab News, 2025). Increasingly, community involvement, local peace committees and livelihood assistance are known as crucial to prevention and decreasing recidivism. In general, CVE in Pakistan has evolved from just a security driven response to a more holistic one including ideology, education, socioeconomic opportunity, and community resilience. Political ownership, regular implementation and a genuine partnership with religious and civil society actors are still vital to long-term success.

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